

Youth and Charismatic Christianity in the Dwars River Valley, Stellenbosch

by

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this research thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

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Date:..

Date: 26/02/2009

OPSOMMING

Die toename in sosiale wanorde in Suid-Afrika tydens die afgelope dekade en 'n half het gelei daartoe dat al hoe meer nie-regerings organisasies na vore begin tree het met oplossings vir sosiale probleme. Encounter, 'n nuut gevormde Pinkster kerk in die Dwars Rivier Vallei het onlangs as 'n baken van hoop vir baie mense gedien. Met die onlangse ontwikkelinge in die vallei wat gelei het tot grootskaalse sosiale veranderinge, kan dit beskryf word as 'n vaste anker in 'n see van onsekerheid en onstabiliteit. Terselfdetyd het dit ook soos 'n groot brander die skip kom skud in die tradisie-vas en kerk-gesentreerde dorpie, Pniel.

Encounter het alternatiewe metodes om sosiale probleme te verhoed en te oorkom by die vallei ingebring. Ek het vir die doel van hierdie studie spesifiek gefokus op die ontasbare, geloofs-gebaseerde aksies en strategieë van Encounter. Hierdie ontasbare metodes, kenmerkend van geestelike charismatiese organisasies, het 'n unieke invloed op die gemeenskap ten opsigte van hul persepsies en sin-maak van sosiale probleme, sosiale samewerking en sosiale identiteit gehad. Terselfdetyd het bekering en die alternatiewe 'toegang' tot spiritualiteit (profetiese woorde, genesing, demonologie, ens.) individuele identiteite geaffekteer op so 'n manier dat dit gelei het tot bemagtiging.

Ten slotte, in hierdie studie was ontasbare geestelike interpretasies nie net ontvanklike en reaksionere verskynsels nie, dit het ook 'n voorkoming en pro-aktiewe vorm aangeneem. Deur middel van rituele was ontasbare gelowe in wapens vir oorlogvoering omskep. Deur Encounter, was daar 'n plek geskep waar mense geestelike opleiding ontvang het oor hoe om hierdie 'wapens' effektief in hul eie lewens te kon gebruik. Mense het na hul dienste toe gegaan om geleer te word en om waar te neem hoe hierdie wapens gebruik was deur middel van geloof. Die motivering was dan dat hulle deur geloof die onmiddellike veranderinge in hul lewens en in hul gemeenskappe sou kon sien.

My metodologie vir hierdie navorsing was deelnemende obserwasie.

ABSTRACT

The rise in social disorder in South Africa over the last decade and a half has contributed to the increase of non-government organizations moving to the forefront of social problem prevention. Encounter, a new Pentecostal church in the Dwars River Valley served as a beacon of hope to many people. With the developments in the valley that resulted in vast social changes it can be described as an anchor in a sea of instability and uncertainty. At the same time, however, Encounter served as a wave that rocked the boat of the traditional and church-centered village of Pniel.

Encounter presented alternative methods of social problem prevention and alleviation for its members. For the purpose of this study, I placed specific emphasis on the intangible, faith-based actions and strategies of Encounter. These intangible methods characteristic of spiritual organizations had a unique influence on the community regarding their perceptions of- and meanings attached to- social problems, social cooperation and social identity. At the same time, conversion and the alternative 'access' to spirituality (prophecies, healing, demonology etc.) affected individual identities and in many ways led to their social empowerment.

Finally, in this study, intangible spiritual interpretations were not only receptive and reactive phenomena, but could also take on the form of intervention and pro-action. Through the use of ritual, intangible beliefs were turned into weapons of warfare. Encounter created a space for the training and use of these 'weapons'. People gathered there to be trained, to observe and to use these weapons with the belief that it would result in immediate change in their lives and in their communities.

My methodology for this research was participant observation.

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The years spent doing this research has brought out the best and the worst in me. I have not only come to valuable new insights but have also learned key lessons about our humanity which will benefit me for the rest of my life- in work, in behaviour, in relationships and in my choices ahead.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIC	African Independent Churches
AFM	Apostolic Faith Mission
BEE	Black Economic Empowerment
BSDI	Boschendal Sustainable Development Initiative
CFC	Champions for Christ
CPF	Community Police Forum
DMI	Divine Ministries International
DRV	Dwars River Valley
EHHSF	Encounter House of Holy Spirit Fire
FBO	Faith-based Organization
GP	Green Pastures
KATSG	Kylemore Anti-Tik Support Group
KHSF	Koinonia House of Holy Spirit Fire
Maties	The University of Stellenbosch
NW	Neighbourhood Watch
NIV	New International Version (Bible)
PNLM	Prophetic New Life Ministries
T&O	Tithes and Offering

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Since 1994, post-apartheid South Africa has undergone vast social, economic and political transformations. A negative effect of these transformations was the rise in social problems such as unemployment, crime and poverty. One of this country's biggest challenges lies in addressing these problems and finding successful ways to eradicate them. Where the government has been absent or silent in these matters we have seen a significant increase in local initiatives, non-government organizations and faith-based organizations (FBOs) taking the lead in attempting to find solutions for the problems.

Of these FBOs, churches have characteristically been, at least in theory, involved in the mission for social upliftment. Especially churches in the so-called third world countries can be very vocal on social issues. Not only are they expressing opinions, but most churches have at least one active branch engaging with social needs. Many people turn to the church when they search for explanations, solutions and the meaning of the deteriorating social circumstances they find themselves in. About two thirds of South Africans are nominal Christians. Thus, it does not come as a surprise that many people continue to turn to religion in the hope of making sense of their circumstances and seeking methods for social transformation.

In South Africa, based on statistics of the period between 1996 and 2001, the membership of traditional mainline churches has declined while charismatic churches, especially AICs¹ showed a steady increase of membership (Egan 2006:451). This is not limited to South Africa, but all over Africa and the world there is a significant rise in the number of so-called Spirit-filled churches (Asamoah-Gyadu 2004:337). Of these Spirit-filled churches, the Pentecostals are speculated to be the fastest growing Christian movement 'with between 300 and 570 million adherents in 2004' (Anderson 2005:175; The Economist 2006:1).

One of the ways that makes FBOs different from other organizations are their alternative methods for preventing and addressing social problems. These 'methods' are intangible and 'activated' through faith. It stems from the belief in God's power and goodness, expressed through verbal exclamations and repetitions believed to carry the power to

¹ African Independent Churches

result in social change². Tangibly, some of these prayers are ritualized within church set-ups. Through non-rational or illogical ways³, rituals are carried out with the expectation to receive natural results. They include rituals of exorcism, Holy Spirit baptism, faith healings, glossolalia⁴ and wealth or 'talent' offerings. In Africa these methods have been and continue to be increasingly popular and an essential characteristic of the Pentecostal movements (see Meyer 1999, 2004 – Ghana; Shorter and Njiru 2001 – Kenya; Badstuebner 2003 - South Africa; Pype 2006, Kinshasa and Pfeiffer 2004 – Mozambique). As for alternative methods, they also present alternative interpretations of-, meanings for- and explanations in order to understand, the current social trends and challenges dominating popular culture.

In this thesis, I looked at how a newly emerging Pentecostal church called Encounter, was accepted and rejected in a village in the Dwars River Valley (DRV). Pniel, one of the three main villages in the DRV, originated as a mission station and has characteristically developed as a single-church community. The long-established Congregational Church in Pniel has become synonymous with the village. Encounter emerged during a time of large-scale development and change in the valley, offering alternative worship practices for the village residents who were accustomed to the practices of the traditional church.

Within Encounter, a space was created in the DRV for people to be taught about the nature of- and brought face to face with the reality of their changing circumstances. The way in which the spiritual leaders made sense of the new situation and the accompanying challenges was through spiritual interpretations from the Pentecostal Christian tradition. Thus, they taught people how to also address and engage with problems through intangible spiritual weapons. On the one hand, this had an effect on individual and group identities as many people experienced the identity shift from being seen as a victim to becoming a victor or an 'overcomer'. On the other hand, the presence of Encounter moved many residents to either reluctantly re-evaluate or strongly defend their own historically influenced identities linked with the traditional church.

² It is important to note that these 'methods' are not perceived as such by those who practice it. For many people, the faith that they put into the power of the Holy Spirit and God is expressed from a place of total conviction and life-commitment. Thus, when it is stated as ritual it is merely to create an understanding for the uninformed non-believer witnessing the practices. The meaning, value and life within these meetings and the often unexplainable results that follow rituals reflect the power of the faith combined with the actions and the response from God to their faith. However, motivation is something unseen and thus unmeasurable so things like 'personal conviction' and 'commitment' may stem from various differing motivations (Lewis 1994:568).

³ These ways are 'non-rational or illogical' as understood in a rationalist world-view.

⁴ The gift of supernaturally speaking in a spiritual language which no human being can understand. It is based on the passage in Acts 2 where the Holy Spirit was 'poured out on the disciples'.

Pniel⁵, where Encounter is situated, originated as a Christian mission station and for many residents, religion still plays a central part in community life. Historically the station was built on a Christian foundation, thus, making sense of social circumstances through spiritual interpretations is not unique to Encounter. However, in practice Encounter has brought in alternative practices and expressions of worship in contrast to the practices of many traditional churches in the valley. In this thesis, I look at the social effects this new Pentecostal movement had on the predominantly traditional Christian community. Encounter had a twofold effect: for some people it added to the uncertainty and change, for others it became a beacon of hope, an anchor of stability amidst all the uncertainty.

To recognize these social effects, I focused on Encounter's response to social disorder in the valley. One of the major social problems which contributed to disorder in the DRV was the steady rise of substance abuse among the youth. At the time of the research, *Tik* was the latest, highly addictive and easily obtainable drug circulating the streets of the Western Cape. Through studying the state of the youth and the destructive effects of *Tik*, various other social problems were also recognized during the research. Many churches in the DRV have started to respond to the 'youth problem' by recognizing the need for a renewed focus on youth development. However, the struggle continues as many youth have become disillusioned with the church and its traditions. As Encounter originated as a youth movement, I attempted to unravel the social reasons for its apparent success in drawing so many young people to their meetings. This is significant because of the enormous generation gap between the youth and their elders characteristic of the post-modern era today.

Religion often influences the behaviour and social interpretations of people. In this case, a church has successfully drawn youth from the streets into alternative activities. According to Cape Media (2007), more than 50 percent of *Tik* abusers seeking treatment in the Cape are under the age of 20. With this increase of drug abuse among the youth and with the traditional churches struggling to keep them captivated, it can thus be very useful to understand exactly what it is about charismatic Christianity that is drawing the youth to their meetings.

⁵ The name Pniel was derived from Genesis 32:30 and refers to a meeting between man and God.

1.2 Problem statement and research questions

Encounter seemed to be successful in helping many people overcome and make sense of their social problems, however, even though the nature of the social problems were general, the 'solutions' they offered were limited to the charismatic Christian Pentecostal tradition. This left the 'access' to these solutions in the hands of those seeking help: they either had to convert to Christianity or to seek alternative solutions elsewhere.

Since Encounter originated as a new social form responding to social disorder in the DRV and since it offered a religious strategy to social ills, the following questions guided this study to unravel the social influence of this new Pentecostal church in a traditional village:

i. What are the major social issues in the DRV?

What role do churches play in helping people cope with a changing society characterized by increased unemployment, criminality and insecurity? What is the current state of the youth in the DRV and how do the local people respond to youth issues?

ii. What are the social effects of Encounter in the DRV and in Pniel?

How did Encounter come into being, who is involved and how does it function? How do people react towards it and what is the nature of its relationships with other churches and organizations in the valley?

iii. Why has this 'new' or alternative form of religion suddenly appeared in Pniel and why is it growing in popularity?

What is Encounter providing (if at all) that the existing churches are not providing? Are people merely exchanging membership of denominations as individuals move around in the pursuit of alternative ways of worship?

iv. What role does spiritual warfare, prophetic faith actions, prayer and spiritual interpretations play in individual and group identity formation?

1.3 Methodology

The main methodology used for this study was a study of the literature and participant observation through ethnographic fieldwork. With regards to participant observation,

This is simply a method for studying people in their regular life pursuits...we observe them..., participating (as a learner) in as much of their life as possible. In this way we seek to develop both knowledge about the people's way of life and an appreciation for how it feels to be an insider (a participant) in the society.

(Kraft 2004:468).

My fieldwork in the DRV started in April 2006 and research at Encounter started in August 2006. The main fieldwork at Encounter was done during the first semester of 2007. However, numerous visits for interviews and key events were made to the valley between August 2006 and September 2007. At Encounter, these events included many youth nights, prayer meetings, special guest visits from international⁶ as well as local pastors, preachers, evangelists and prophets, a youth conference, a healing crusade with one of Encounter's founders, a Benny Hinn crusade in Cape Town and a visit to the afternoon welfare program at the youth centre.

As Encounter is not the only organization with a focus on youth development, representatives of other churches' youth groups and initiatives in the area were also interviewed and gatherings, events or meetings were attended. This has been done in a less structured way since I was often led to these meetings or across the paths of the people involved in a spontaneous, often coincidental manner. Some of these interactions were, among others, with the Old Apostolic Church, the Congregational Church and Kylemore high and primary schools. Interviews were also conducted with representatives of the Baptist church, teachers and students involved in the schools, organizers of unofficial interdenominational youth ventures and a lay preacher. A small number of questionnaires was given to youth members at Encounter ranging in ages from 11 to 25. I also participated unofficially in a life skills program hosted by Champions for Christ (CFC)⁷ at the primary school in Kylemore.

In order to gain a broader understanding of the extent of the Tik drug, and its effects (being one of the major current challenges facing the valley), ex Tik addicts were

⁶ Australia, USA, Nigeria, Kenya etc.

⁷ Champions for Christ is a branch of Every Nation, an international family of churches. The development branch of CFC offers free sport clinics and workshops for schools in rural areas. With the sport they also educate students about life skills such as teamwork, personal worth, leadership etc.

approached. An interview with one was successful while some other users agreed to participate in an anonymous survey and questionnaire. Informal interviews and conversations with people related to Tik users as well as those residents who were less informed or affected have helped to shape my understanding of different perceptions about the drug and its social effects.

The nature of the research was qualitative, thus I was regularly present on site and at relevant meetings and events hosted by Encounter. Thorough observation, limited participation and continuous reflection occurred. Interviews were also conducted with members of the Kylemore Anti-Tik Support Group (KATSG) and with the Neighbourhood Watch (NW). I participated in an anti-Tik march, organized by KATSG in Kylemore and accompanied the NW on one of their routine night patrols through the valley.

Since the main object of this research concerned the supernatural and its social influence, it was a difficult object to 'pin down' and explain. The Comaroffs pointed out how intangible objects like these placed ethnography on an '*awkward scale*' since the realm of the supernatural could never be limited to a particular time, place or person(s) (Comaroff and Comaroff 2003:151). Thus, the supernatural elements of Encounter's social problem prevention is not unique to the place, neither is it restricted to the organizational set-up. Since I was restricted to the limits of time and space, I realized that the rituals observed at Encounter may also have been practiced by Encounter visitors during the week in other locations. Thus, I do not claim to have knowledge about the scope of the practice and spread of these rituals and supernatural methods within the entire valley - that may even be immeasurable!

It should also be noted, that religious beliefs entail a high level of intangible interaction between man and the unseen. This phenomenon is challenging to study ethnographically. Although often seemingly bizarre, Geertz pointed out that one cannot easily prove beliefs of the supernatural as being untrue - or true (Glazier and Flowerday 2003:3). Thus, the intention of this study was not to contest or to confirm the validity of the research subjects' behaviour and beliefs. Rather, the aim was to understand the way in which they made sense of their environment through the meaning derived from religious interpretations of their immediate circumstances in the face of social disorder.

Observations in the field were grounded, contested or understood through relevant literature forming the theoretical framework and historical context for the research. The content of this literature included work on the Anthropology of Religion, research in

social transformation and Pentecostal ethnographies, historical records (written or media), published and unpublished, official and unofficial, surrounding Religion and Youth primarily in the DRV.

Many researchers have pointed out that while the researcher was being absorbed into the lives of his/her subjects and drawn closer while interacting with the core of social life, it was equally important that a sense of distance was simultaneously retained (Harvey and Fillitz 2006; Palriwala 2005; Bate 1997). This comes down to the importance of not only gaining access, trust and close relationships with individuals, but at the same time to maintain a type of reluctant distance. Especially, as I was coming from a Christian background, I had to be wary of not affecting the flow of things because I realized that my voice could have been heard, valid and influential in certain situations. I thus felt it important to manage a balance of '*voluntary and involuntary distancing*' as well as engagement (Blanes 2006).

With regards to the Valley as a whole and with planned and unplanned visits, it was considered useful to approach all individuals as valuable resources representing, in speech as well as manner, at least one, if not multiple aspects of village life (*Notes and Queries on Anthropology* 1951). Gaining access was not problematic. I was welcomed in an open arms kind of manner. The only prerequisite before being allowed to study Encounter was that I myself had to be a believer and that I had to resolve to record and write up nothing but the truth – so help me God! I understood this to mean that everything I witnessed was to be recorded in a factual manner with no added detail. During my fieldwork I attempted, to the best of my judgment and knowledge to reveal events and conversations exactly as they occurred from my vantage point. The analysis, discussions and opinions that followed the fieldwork were written in line with my own interpretations and unpacked within the relevant theoretical framework.

1.4 Overview of chapters

This thesis consists of six chapters. In Chapter Two, the relevant literature about the anthropology of religion, Pentecostalism and gift exchange is discussed. In Chapter Three I sketch the historical and cultural context wherein Encounter came into being: the history of Pniel and the strong influence of the Congregational Church. In Chapter Four I discuss the current social state of the valley with a specific focus on the youth and the devastating drug called Tik. In the second half of Chapter Four I explain some of the key local initiatives and church reactions to the desperate state of the youth in the valley.

Chapter Five deals with my case study: Encounter House of Holy Spirit Fire. The history, functioning and programs of Encounter are discussed and the second half of the chapter unravels the social impact of Encounter as understood through the intangible faith-activated methods of problem prevention practiced there. I conclude this study with Chapter Six wherein a short overview of my findings are presented.

2. RELIGION UNPACKED

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the definition of Religion and focus on the Pentecostal tradition as a form of charismatic Christianity. The issue of reciprocity is discussed in further detail since it will be shown that by studying the processes and relationships surrounding gift exchanges in its various forms, the behaviour and dynamics of identity formation in a religious organization is revealed.

I find it fascinating to observe the immense diversity in expression, discourse and ritual that can be found under the single umbrella of Christianity. Across the world this religion has been localized to make sense to minute marginalized communities and it has been globalized through world-wide networks of multi-media webs stretching across borders, connecting Christians from Latin America, Africa, America, etc. and contributing to the molding of their understanding and expression into denominational-centered similarity and unity. Christianity has been influential to various, often opposing groups of people in the same locales- for some people legitimizing their political convictions and actions while for others serving as the balm for healing wounds caused by those acting on their Biblical convictions. Apartheid in South Africa is a classic example: most churches were either actively involved in the anti-apartheid struggle, passively observing or purposefully endorsing the Apartheid rule (Egan 2006). Many did it, in some way or other, in the name of Christianity. The focus I am trying to convey is towards the immense power that lies within the broad spectrum of religion. The power to influence, transform or legitimise every sphere of human activity in some way or another. This power is executed most effectively in a collective organizational form, the most common forms being churches or different types of faith based NGOs.

In the DRV the power of organized religion was evident in the tremendous influence of the traditional church on village life. However, this same power took on another form through the newly established Pentecostal Encounter organisation.

In studies in the anthropology of religion a unique characteristic of the Christian religion was found to be the promise of attainable eternal salvation. Along with this, I choose to accept Geertz' understanding of the meaning-making function which religion serves. It serves as a vital sense-making and explanatory function for human life. However, I understand religion to stretch beyond the bounds of symbolic meaning-making to the actual factuality of human existence.

Religious beliefs are not merely conscience-soothing and 'ease-bringing' balms for the unexplainable in the world. For me, it is the legitimate bridge that brings the unfamiliar and the supernatural into a functional and interpretable form for humans to take a hold on and make sense of. Thus, this study shows how the rational and the supernatural are not two separate entities, they are interlinked and in fact, they are inseparable in our human existence.

2.2 The Anthropology of Religion

Religion is a suitcase word. It belongs right up there next to the term *culture*. Depending on your author, most definitions of religion either define what it *is* or what it *does*.

'Marxist explanations depicted religions and religious beliefs as fictions that supported the status quo and that maintained class differences... Functionalists like Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown and Evans Pritchard, explained religion as providing explanations that satisfied human needs or maintained social structure...Symbolic Anthropologists such as Clifford Geertz viewed religion as a system of symbols that ascribe meaning to the universe and to existence'.

(Birx 2006:2005).

'The end or aim of religion is salvation. Salvation, variously defined, usually includes deliverance from the grief, pains, and sorrows common in this life, and entrance into an ideal state of conscious, happy, and eternal existence'.

(Robertson 1991:21).

Birx characterised religion with the unique 'ability to redeem and give salvation' (2006:2003). However, in the non-theoretical Christian discourse there are various definitions for religion. In Charismatic circles the term 'religion' or 'religious' and 'religiosity' often has negative connotations. It is grouped with 'tradition' and thus the idea of being bound by lifeless rituals and laws that threaten the freedom of movement of the Holy Spirit. It nullifies the grace and replaces the 'free' gift of eternal life with achieved rewards based on merit of behaviour and rigid obedience that all comes down to self-righteousness. At Encounter, many people found their liberation from the religion they associated with tradition. Many people who have become disillusioned with the methods of the traditional church claimed to have experienced their true salvation and redemption through this newly established Pentecostal church.

Pentecostalism is the most experiential branch of Christianity, a movement that started to rise first at the turn of the century as protest against 'man-made creeds' and the 'coldness' of traditional worship.

(Cox 1995:14).

2.2.1 The rational and the supernatural

Many anthropologists have dismissed explanations for religious behaviour given in the form of supernatural phenomena and tried to establish the behaviour of believers through economic, political, psychological or sociological analyses (Morris 1987; Comaroff 2007; Glazier and Flowerday 2003:5). Thus, scholars have attempted to unravel the world of the unseen - its vast mysteries seemingly only accessible and explainable through faith - in logical, rational terms. The state of a society, its economy, its political orientation and the way in which it functions have often been the focus of studies in order to understand the 'forms and values' characterizing a religion (De Waal Malefijt 1969; Comaroff 2007).

In this study, the deteriorating social circumstances in the DRV (crime, drugs, unemployment) were taken into account in order to understand the significance of Encounter at this moment in time. However inside Encounter, a focus on the rituals and beliefs surrounding the supernatural revealed many people's understanding of their economic, political and social realities. By focusing on a community's belief in the supernatural, we can gain a tremendous amount of knowledge about their behaviour and how they understand the world.

According to the following definitions, religion and the supernatural are inseparable. Since the early history of humanity, humans have always been expressing the innate desire to worship. Worship often entails explorations of the realms of the unseen and the intangible. Muller suggested that this desire was intrinsic to our humanity (Morris 1987). In *Defining Religion* by Donovan (2003), definitions by anthropologists such as Firth, Wallace and Tyler lay emphasis on the presence of the supernatural and our human interaction with it, as being core to religion in its barest forms. Petrus (2006:1) went beyond religion as culturally specific and said that humanity's intrigue with the supernatural is not just a selective phenomenon, but a 'cultural universal'. William James defined religion as being 'founded on the subjective experience of an invisible presence' (Quoted in Keane 1997). Birx (2006:1999, 2003), connected religion with humans and the supernatural being in some form of relationship.

This study investigates the belief in the dominant presence of the supernatural in religious behaviour and meaning-making at Encounter. By observing behaviour, it became evident that the approach of 'rationalism' was problematic. I use the word rationalism here as Geertz defined it namely that rationalism explains the seemingly unexplainable or makes the 'unacceptable' acceptable by putting it in a 'larger, even cosmic, perspective' (Segal 2003:19,20).

One thing that made the behavioural side of Pentecostal religious worship unique was the non-rationality of many faith-activated guidelines prescribed by the Scriptures. In order to receive, you need to give, to be first you need to be last, if you humble yourself you will be lifted up, etc. According to *Western* economically progressive rational modes of thought the means for these ends are not logical. Thus, the results can seldom be logically 'worked out' or argued, they need to be tried and tested and the only way they can be 'activated', is through a faith that transcends our human understanding.

And this faith influences how people will behave. Geertz, according to Segal (2003), suggested that 'behaviour effects a sense-making need, which is (a/so) its cause'. However, if you bring rationality into the equation, people often react or behave in various ways without giving their behaviour conscious thought. Thus, had they rationally thought about the act before conducting it, they would have refrained. However, having done it without thinking and seeing results that logically they couldn't have predicted, this results in behaviour effecting in faith. An example can be how an individual might give away a large amount of money and then receive an unexpected gift of greater worth in return. This might then result in his or her belief that it is more blessed to give than to receive. In the future he or she might continue behaving in a more generous way due to the belief in the benefits that will follow even though rationally it doesn't make sense to have more the more you give away.

Geertz focus of research was on practical behaviour in order to get to the bottom of the meanings attached to it (Segal 2003:28,31). As we have stated earlier, behaviour reflects beliefs. Through ritual, the intangible is made tangible. What Geertz 'deems ritual ethos: ... is the concrete manifestation of the world view' it is thus the action that accompanies and affirms the faith (Segal 2003:31). Thus, in this study there is a focus on the seemingly irrational behaviour of Encounter members in order to understand the meaning and belief they have in God. Their behaviour was ritualized in actions such as prayer, deliverance, tithes and offerings, etc. These actions were executed with the faith that social problems had to be eradicated.

Weber explained how irrational goals are pursued through rational means:

‘Wertrational, or value-oriented rationality, is characterized by striving for a goal that in itself may not be rational, but which is pursued through rational means. The values come from within an ethical, religious, philosophical or even holistic context – they are not rationally ‘chosen’. The traditional example in the literature is of an individual seeking salvation through following the teachings of a prophet’.

(Quoted in Elwell 1996:55).

At Encounter the opposite of the above mentioned statement was demonstrated: many rational goals were pursued through irrational means. Prophecies and prophetic actions were done to counter poverty, unemployment, sickness and relational dysfunctions. Comaroff and Comaroff (2003:150) have dubbed this transaction between the seen and the unseen as an ‘*occult economy*’. However, the *magical* and the *mystical* they refer to correlate with the effects of angels and demons through which Pentecostals make sense of these actions. An organizational setup ‘legitimizes’ the execution of local initiatives to counter and address social problems, no matter how irrational the rituals or solutions might be. In this study, rituals and behaviour stretch beyond matters of rationality and practicality, to deeper levels of meaning.

2.2.2 Meaning and behaviour

Weber ascribed the true realization of meaning to lie outside the logic of rationalization and inside the ‘non-rational acceptance of the dogmatic propositions embedded in the salvation ethic of a religion’ (Keyes 2002:341). Geertz was of the opinion that religious beliefs are outcomes of meaning contestations around ‘fundamental problems’ (Keyes 2002). He emphasized the richness of meaning embedded in religion (Morris 1987:312). On the other hand, Weber said, ‘the human mind... is driven to reflect on ethical and religious questions, driven not by material need but by an inner compulsion to understand the world as a meaningful cosmos and to take up a position toward it’ (Keyes 2002). Glazier and Flowerday (2003) said that the ‘meaning-making, the mental and emotional energy-generating...functions of religion’ should not be ignored in research findings. Kishimoto (1961:240) defined religion as ‘an aspect of culture centred upon activities which are taken by those who participate in them to elucidate the ultimate meaning of life’ (Quoted in Donovan 2003:77).

Finally, there was Gans (1990:120) who said that ‘religion can most simply be defined as the activity that commemorates human origin’ (Donovan 2003:8). This last definition

breaks it down to the bare basics. I would just add that it includes activities surrounding human destiny and the present reality as well so that religious activity can be viewed not only through historical motivation, but also through progressive expectation. Thus, it would be incomplete to do a study on religion and not discuss the importance of the sense-making role it plays.

Religion can teach people to understand, manage and/or re-act to just about any situation they face throughout life. Religion takes away all possibilities of chance and coincidence through thorough explanations and the ritualization of a belief system. Religion practiced at Encounter served to explain the origins and reasons behind various social problems. It taught believers how to manage, counter and make sense of their social problems. Not only was meaning attached to it, but based on these meanings, actions followed in organization-specific rituals. Some meanings were first expressed verbally and then became ritualized. In this way, words became more than tools for explaining – they became a means to an end, a concrete ‘weapon’ of cause and effect (Coleman 2000:129).

Segal (2003) similarly referred to this function of religion in Geertz description of how the Azande interpret their ‘accidents’ through witchcraft and it thus not only ‘explains and makes (*accidents*) bearable but also spurs revenge’. ‘...what Geertz calls the “ethos” tells one how to act in light of the world view’ (Segal 2003). The actions are once again ritualized. Religion serves to encapsulate both the ethos and the world view, thus the explanation and the guide for reactive behaviour (Segal 2003:19, 21). However, research at Encounter has revealed that when people learn how to understand, manage or re-act against social problems, this knowledge can also be used to find methods of preventing social problems. Thus, they gradually shift from a position of defence to one of offence. This then becomes an empowering process as it influences identities.

2.2.3 Pentecostalism

The term Pentecostalism refers to a passage in the Bible in Acts 2, on the day of Pentecost where the Holy Spirit ‘came upon’ the disciples and they were filled with power and started speaking in ‘tongues of fire’. A newspaper article aptly stated how Pentecostals believed that ‘the Spirit could enter ordinary mortals and give them extraordinary powers’ (The Economist 2006:2). Social behaviour or circumstances were understood through spirituality and demonology rather than the more rational status quo of current intellectual thought (Meyer 1999; Vahakangas and Kyomo 2003:76). The way

the early Pentecostal gatherings were described doesn't differ much from what you'll find in Pentecostal services today.

It went hand in hand with loud expressive forms of worship, the unbridled free flow of emotions and lots of divine healings and faith-filled demonstrations. Baptism, prophetic actions and words, dreams and visions, the gifts of the Spirit, faith healings and exorcism were natural in Pentecostal gatherings (Meyer 2004:4; Hwata 2005:10). People were often *slain in the Spirit*⁸ after having the hands of preachers laid on them (Barker 2003:278). People of different races worshipped side by side (Cox 1995:29; The Economist 2006:2).

Pentecostalism is said to have originated in Los Angeles in 1906 in what was called the 'Azusa Street Revival' (Cox 1995:24; The Economist 2006:1). William J. Seymour was a Black preacher who was chiefly responsible for beginning the movement. Similar to the residents of Pniel who were descendents of freed slaves, he was the son of a freed slave. The origin of Pentecostalism can be attributed to the desire of many believers to see a revival and to experience the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Meetings were said to be very spontaneous and unpredictable as the leaders often left the nature of the procedures to the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Hwata 2005:17).

Pentecostalism, from the start has been an expansionist, mission focused movement (Anderson 2006:108). The use of traditional church buildings was very uncommon. Halls were rented, movie theatres, school auditoriums and gymnasiums were also very common. Often, believers would simply meet in each other's homes. Due to the unorthodox informality of acceptable places of worship, Pentecostalism spread fast and easily among the marginalized and poorer populations. Better known then as the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM), missionaries were sent out within the first two years since Azusa Street to places such as 'China, India, Japan, Egypt, Liberia, Angola and South Africa' (Anderson 2006:111). It spread throughout the world during the twentieth century. In 1908, John G. Lake was one of the first American Pentecostal leaders who came to South Africa to start the AFM through the Pentecostal tradition and through a healing ministry (Hwata 2005:22). Between 1944 -1964 Pentecostalism spread through South Africa, particularly among the black and poorer white population 'under the leadership of J.E. Mullan and Nicholas Bhengu' (Hofmeyr and Pillay 1994:265).

⁸ Sometimes when people prayed for each other and put their hands on each other, the Holy Spirit of God would flow from one person to the next and the person receiving the Spirit would collapse under the immense power.

The strong Western influence and origins of Pentecostalism were undeniable, yet once the religion touched the African soil it was 'reinvented' and expressed in local languages in creative local ways. Thus, the rapid spread of Pentecostalism cannot be accredited only to foreign missionaries, local responses and the vast expansion of it can be attributed to many non-Western believers as well (Maxwell 2000:473; Anderson 2005:176; Anderson 2006:8). In the DRV, Encounter has completely localized this form of religion. The spiritual rituals of prayer, tithes and offerings, deliverance and baptism remained the same, yet the worship style, the types of dancing and the content of the messages have taken on the unique flavour of the people of the DRV.

2.2.4 Traditional mainline churches

Pentecostal churches often find their definition in the way which they differ from traditional churches (Meyer 2004:3; Barker 2003; Cox 1995). This can lead to power plays and delicate relational politics between the different denominations, especially in smaller communities such as the DRV. Instead of coming along side by side, many community members tend to express greater loyalty to specific denominations. Older established churches, such as the Congregational Church tend to frown upon the newer movements (Encounter) and are often caught off guard by their sudden popularity. Thus, being uncertain about how to approach each other, some members tend to perceive the newer movements as rivals or threats rather than as companions (Vahakangas and Kyomo 2003:66; The Economist 2006:2).

Not only is there tension between the 'old' and the 'new' movements, but even among the movements themselves there is often not a clear common chord of unity and relationships (Shorter and Njiru 2001). Many regular visitors of charismatic gatherings still retain their membership at the mainline traditional churches (Meyer 2006:4). In Pniel there are various reasons why this might occur, the most repeated one being the benefits that are lost if an individual officially retracts his or her membership. This includes funeral rights, marriage rights and the fear of social marginalization.

Meyer (1999) has pointed out how Pentecostalism propagates that local culture is limiting and that one must think beyond its confines. This function of religion forms part of Encounter's mandate as well: to break away from the set traditions and strong religious hegemonies in Pniel and to embrace diversity in culture, race, creed and denomination. Encounter is very vocal in its opposition to the strong traditional character of the historical mainline churches. Characteristic of charismatic churches, the leaders of Encounter are outspoken against religion as being perceived and practiced merely as

'lifeless' tradition. However, what we understand as tradition is important here. Meyer (2006:7) describes the African indigenous traditions as being incorporated into the Christian religious practice through song and music.

At Encounter tradition refers to the mere rituals of Christianity without the life-giving presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, they refer to laws and traditions that mainline churches require but which are not necessary according to the Bible for a person to receive salvation. An example here is the strict rules around dress code. The set structures and fixed predictable rituals followed in church are perceived as barriers hindering the move of the Spirit. Thus, the seemingly chaotic Pentecostal services are more anticipated than it might appear to an outsider. The chaos thus becomes the 'new' tradition.

Pentecostals often see Christians from the traditional churches as being 'lost' and a new mission is taken up to reach out to the neighbourhood. In this way, the traditional understanding of mission fields has been simplified by Pentecostals to mean any terrain believers might cover in their daily routines (Coleman 2000:110).

2.3 Gift Exchange

2.3.1 New identities and social cohesion

Sykes (2005) gave explanations for social cooperation and relationships through Mauss' theory of gift exchange. Inside a religious organisation it is insightful to understand the cooperation amidst a diversity of people from different socioeconomic or socio-cultural backgrounds in light of gift exchanges. Of equal interest was the role of identity formation in maintaining unity and cooperation. Durkheim attributed this type of unity to be founded on a shared set of values in order to explain social cohesion (Morris 1987). At Encounter, once converted to Christianity, individuals experienced a whole new identity transformation and value shift which took their lives into a new direction. Buckser attributed the formulation of new identities as the 'primary function of religious institutions' (Quoted in Glazier and Flowerday 2003:4). '...While religion arises to serve the individual, it also serves society. Indeed, it does so in the process of serving the individual' (Segal 2003:23).

It is through studying the processes of reciprocity that we can understand the effects of gift exchange on identity. In the Christian faith, God gave his only Son. In exchange, people give their lives back to God. To be able to give something away, it is logically assumed that you have excess. In other words, when people start giving of their time,

talents and money at Encounter, many people have undergone the transformation from being a person in want and in need, to a person able to give something back or away. Through this mutual culture of giving, a type of group identity and belonging is formed. This ultimately contributes to social cohesion.

A gift does not have to be something tangible or of economic value. In this study, I refer to a gift as either being a service rendered voluntarily or an object given, thus, it can be measured in wealth (object) or time (service). Marcel Mauss described the nature of exchange practices among the Polynesians saying that ...

‘... what they exchange is not solely property and wealth, moveable and immovable goods, and things economically useful. In particular, such exchanges are acts of politeness: banquets, rituals, military services, women, children, dances, festivals, and fairs, in which economic transaction is only one element and in which the passing on of wealth is only one feature of a much more general and enduring contract’.

(Mauss 1990:5).

To illustrate how gift exchange can contribute to social cohesion, this study looked at examples of money rituals, material articles being passed on from person to person, and voluntary services offered at Encounter. However, it should be noted that the exchange always involved the belief in a third party to compensate for the object sacrificed. Wealth was not only met with wealth but also with ‘generalized reciprocal exchanges’ of immeasurable or at least very subjective ideas of value comparisons (Seymour-Smith 1986:240). Often people also gave in order to gain prosperity. However, as Maxwell (2000:475) noted, the prosperity referred to should not necessarily be taken to be strictly material. The messages are communicated with confidence and conviction and members are also drawn to prospects of unity, identity and security presented by the church. This will be illustrated and further explained in the examples discussed in the 5th chapter.

According to Nojonen, gifts establish ties of dependency (2001:24). By giving a gift, you either acknowledge your dependency on the receiver/someone/something else or you do it to nullify a state of dependency (reciprocating a gift). In popular Pentecostal discourse it can be seen as breaking ties of ‘bondage’. People also give in order to be associated or ‘connected’ to someone or something. An explanation for this can be because it is something/someone they consider to be of some kind of value. You reveal

your support/belief/affiliation through gifts, be it material or immaterial. Thus, often without being asked, people 'give' in order to reveal the value they attach to things they feel adds worth to their own lives. Examples for this are seen in the way people buy CDs and merchandise of bands or sports stars they feel contribute to their own well-being. Through wearing and exposing their support, they feel connected to people around the world they might have never even met or seen in real life. In the same way, around the world people offer their services and money as gifts to establish their dependency and affiliation with a specific religion or god. These gifts are often given and shared within the traditional church organizational setup.

2.3.2 Relationships

Strathern has pointed out that people cannot be studied as separate entities from individual to individual or object to individual (Sykes 2005:74). They must be studied as a whole and in this manner the objects being exchanged are merely the cement keeping the bricks together in a network of relationships. Through her focus on the relationship rather than the object, Strathern provides another possible explanation for people's obligation to give. People buying merchandise, etc. in order to reveal their association/affiliation, explain a way of making sense of life without the necessary relationships. It creates a sense of belonging and identity similar to Anderson's 'imagined communities' (Anderson 1983:15; Meyer 2006:9). In this way, individuals harbour a sense of expansion - you can then say you 'belong' to or are part of something that covers more territory than you yourself may be able to ever possess. This study reveals how the same sense of community and worth is satisfied with a relationship with an ever present 'third person', God. Thus, people belong to and can relate with a global community of Christians they might have never met yet they share a communal doctrine of giving based on their relationship with God as well as a common identity found in their faith.

2.4 Conclusion

Where there is religion involved people tend to group together and organize their lives around a central ethic, deity or doctrine and ritualize their intangible beliefs in ways that allow collective action, expression, expansion and conformity. The meanings attached to these rituals and beliefs and the ways in which they affect society through the lives of individuals are the point of interest in this study. I use examples of where the supernatural is interwoven in the rituals performed at Encounter, evidenced in the supernatural results witnessed in the lives of many participants.

In this study it is interesting to note that both the traditional and the Pentecostal church proclaimed this message of eternal salvation, however they disagreed on the methods and traditions of each other's practical application of religion.

3. THE DWARS RIVER VALLEY: HISTORY, THE CHURCH AND RECENT CHANGES

3.1 Introduction

The first thing that struck me when I entered the Dwars River Valley (DRV) was its spectacular natural beauty and the majestic mountains surrounding it. Situated between Stellenbosch and Franschhoek and sandwiched between Simonsberg and the Groot Drakenstein Mountain range, the DRV is today a popular tourist attraction in the Western Cape. Although not geographically isolated, the atmosphere of the valley generates the feeling of peaceful seclusion. There are four villages in the DRV, namely Kylemore, Lanquedoc, Johannesdal and Pniel. After spending some time with the local residents, it's hard not to be impressed by their passion and proud identity. Especially in Pniel and Kylemore, the sense of community and togetherness was verbally celebrated and practically experienced through warm hospitality and open conversations.

Many of the Pniel and Kylemore residents I spent time with were quite well-informed about their village history and I enjoyed many narrations of personal memories, popular stories and historical legends. Unfortunately, most of the written history of Pniel was chiefly done informally by residents and church leaders whose writings primarily focused on their own families and lives. Thus, it didn't include a holistic perspective on the life of the whole village or valley and all its inhabitants. Based on oral recollections, written and media sources, some of the history of the DRV, specifically the history surrounding the churches, will be described below.

Starting with the founding of Pniel, this chapter is used to emphasize the strong controlling and culture-shaping role that the traditional church had on the village. In this context it is easier to understand the controversial nature of Encounter in the village. We can look at the history of the Congregational Church and early village life to understand the historical and cultural context in which Encounter came into being. Specific factors, such as the history of strong control from the church leaders, the lack of organized leisure activities and the unofficial emphasis many residents placed on status, class and the unofficial 'rules' for citizenship are important to note in order to understand the impact of Encounter in the DRV. All these factors have exposed a common fear among many residents: the fear of change and the unknown.

Another more recent occurrence that shook the people of the valley was the economic developments in Kylemore and Lanquedoc over the last few years. By briefly looking at the history of these two villages it will serve to broaden our understanding of the drastic

changes that have begun in the DRV since 1998 leading to the Boschendal Sustainable Development Initiative (BSDI). It is important to note that although the DRV is relatively small and the people in many ways interconnected, there are many locally unique characteristics that have been formed in the course of history, especially in the last two centuries. The character, culture and history of each village, is unique. Thus, they should be viewed as such.

In this chapter, I set out to explain the history of Pniel and its church and to touch on some of the relevant and interesting historical and developmental characteristics of Lanquedoc and Kylemore. However, the main focus is on Pniel. By looking at the examples and history below, we can better understand the context wherein Encounter came into being, especially the strong traditional nature of village life based in the Congregational Church in Pniel.

3.2 Pniel: the single-church mission station

In 1843 in the Groot Drakenstein Valley, land from a farm called *De Goede Hoop*⁹ was donated for the construction of a church and a school for workers on the surrounding farms (Louw 1950:6). On this land, the first village in the DRV came into being: the mission station Pniel. There were mixed opinions as to the motive behind the establishment of Pniel. From the church perspective it was a project for the emancipation for the then recently freed slaves who were viewed by the missionaries as a people ripe for evangelism. However, the freeing of slaves in 1834 presented labour problems for the farmers in the area. Thus, from an economic perspective, farmers wanted to curb the exodus of labourers from their farms by providing for them a church and a school (*Die Burger* 5 September 2003, www.ancestry24.co.za 2007). According to Silverbauer (1943:8), the objectives of this mission station can be described as follows: 'This institution Pniel was a mission intended for the benefit of the coloured¹⁰ people of that neighbourhood, the object being to educate them in the Apostolic Faith, to give them an ordinary elementary education, and also to train them in agricultural pursuits with a view to making them useful labourers easily available for the owners of the neighbouring estates'.

⁹ Also called Zilvermyn.

¹⁰ Today the term 'Coloured' is often understood as a derogatory, racially discriminating label. The term implies connotations of poverty and 'otherness' in a historically segregated South Africa. The use of the term *coloured* in this study is by no means referring to a bounded and fixed definition of a type of person, identity or class. Today, many people still take offence at the use of the term. Thus, by using it in this context no intent was made to classify individuals or to cause offence.

It was religious leaders and farmers belonging to the Apostolic Union who started this establishment. Reverend John Frederick Stegmann, a white minister, was appointed by the Apostolic Union as head of Pniel. From the young age of 19 until 65, in 1910, Stegmann was 'pastor in charge of the spiritual affairs of the Mission, the schoolmaster in charge of the secular education and the administrator of the temporal affairs of the Institution' (Silberbauer 1943:8).

Thus, through Reverend Stegmann, the church held the dominant position at the station. The village developed around the church. The church was responsible for all the religious activities, such as weddings, communion, prayer meetings, Sunday services, Sunday school, Bible education, etc. Apart from the religious and spiritual education, Stegmann and the church were also overseeing the public discipline and determined the official laws governing the station.

These laws included strict rules of land ownership succession and conduct (Louw 1950:12). If members failed to abide by the rules, they faced various punishments, some as severe as complete expulsion from the mission station. 'He (*Stegmann*) controlled everything. He controlled the post office, he controlled the education, he controlled people's household issues, he executed punishment as he saw fit and no one dared to stop him. He was a big figure here in the society' (Roos 1985, my translation). In this way, as one resident explained, 'Stegmann ruled the station with an iron fist' (Pniel resident 2006.04.07).

Other rules included the compulsory attendance of religious events, compulsory self-cultivation by every erfholder of his own land and the ban of alcohol, dance parties and canteens in the village. Stegmann basically advocated and enforced a system of high moral standards and Christian values. If residents of Pniel married Muslims or anyone from another religion, they were not allowed to retain their allocated residential plot.

Although very controlling and somewhat dictatorial, some residents commented that the church overall had a very positive impact on the moral foundation and economic development of the village. One resident proudly explained that Pniel was very different from other mission stations. 'Most other stations remained the same and did not really develop much. Pniel, in contrast, was progressive. The people worked on the farms during the day and afterwards they would work their own land and grow their own fruit. They would travel with a horse wagon to the city and trade their goods there. Then they

would bring back things to sell from the city. Pniel worked itself in the direction of independence' (Pniel resident 2006.04.07).

However, the strict rules and social segregation enforced by the church resulted in a high emphasis being placed on status and position. In order to gain certain privileges in the station, church membership and a strong discipline of self-control were prerequisites. Van der Waal aptly stated that 'the church was... a powerful agent that managed the social transformation of the ex-slaves into strongly controlled church-members with limited citizenship' (2005:6).

After the death of Rev. Stegmann there were 7 years of uncertainty during which the Dutch Reformed Church tried to gain control over Pniel after the Apostolic Union withdrew its involvement. In 1917, however, church members decided to bring the spiritual well-being of Pniel under the leadership of the *Congregational Union Church Aid and Mission Society of South Africa* (Louw 1950:10).

History reveals how the church came to play such an integrating role in village life, while its strong influence is still prominent in Pniel today. Today, many older residents struggle with the idea of accepting a new religious organisation parallel to their traditional church. Being used to the powerful voice of the (now) Congregational Church, anything proclaiming a message contradicting their doctrine and traditions or existing alongside it, is frowned upon or outright criticized by some of its members.

3.2.1 The Congregational Church and becoming a member



Figure 3.1. The Congregational Church in Pniel

With the vision of being *the Body of Christ in the world today*, the church became known as the Congregational Church¹¹ in 1917 (*Die Burger* 2003). The Congregational Church continued to exercise a strong control over village life. It was responsible for authorising weddings, communion and funerals. The church still saw to all the administrative requirements of the village. All the erfholders in Pniel had to make a monthly payment to the church whether they were members or not. According to Louw (1950:36), new membership in the *Konkerk* was decided through a vote from the existing members.

Through a vote from the congregation, the *kerkraad* (church council) was elected. The council members were esteemed very highly in the village and had to be of noble and righteous character able to manage their personal lives orderly. These representatives ranged from farm workers to teachers and businessmen (Louw 1950:31).

The nature and organization of traditional churches and Pentecostal churches differ on many grounds. In the Congregational Church, religious leaders were required to be strongly convinced of their spiritual calling and of utmost importance was their academic education (Louw 1950:26). This is in strong contrast to the Pentecostal calling where many preachers often didn't receive any formal education. Pentecostals tend to be less concerned with traditions and formalities and more concerned with intangible 'spiritual' matters. Membership in the Pentecostal tradition can be better understood as being part of a family than of an organization.

¹¹ Today many people casually refer to it as the *Konkerk*

Members are thus not elected, rather members become part of a church family when they are 'born again' and become active in their churches.

Before becoming a member of the Congregational Church, the youth had to do a one year course, learning all the Congregational teachings and Bible training after which the teacher decided whether the kid was ready to be accepted as a member (Louw 1950:38). A Pniel resident jokingly, yet concerned, explained how today most kids go to church because their parents force them to go. Thus, *aanneming*, or church membership granted when a child finishes his Bible teaching, was considered by the youth as their ticket to finally leave the church.

The official system followed to control church membership was reflected to some extent in the unofficial 'rules' that existed for citizenship in Pniel which will be looked at in the next section.

3.2.2 Status, class and citizenship

A Congregational church leader made the following statement:

'There is a growing need as well as a social necessity for the church to break out of its established traditional mindset, to move from exclusivity to inclusivity. The church has missed its core mission throughout the years: inclusivity. Clear evidence of this is the absence of farm workers in the Congregational Church. We want to expand the church into Lanquedoc, but this is easier said than done. People are hesitant to 'open' the church since they grew up with the understanding that the church membership largely influences social status. Thus, class differences play a central role in the church'.

(Representative of the Congregational Church in Pniel 2006.04.10).

'Pniel functions like a family. Everybody knows everybody and the church (Congregational Church) has a voice in all the events of the village'.

(Kylemore resident 2006.08.02).

Similar statements concerning the nature of a close-knit community have been shared with me, some in positive and others in negative terms. Positive in the sense that people truly feel that there exists a unity that is unique to the people of Pniel. Negative in the reality that not everyone in Pniel goes to church or are Christians.

Some people feel that the church has too much influence in the valley and that people know too much about each other's personal lives. In other words, too many people enjoy a good gossip story. Hence the common phrase I often heard, 'everybody knows everybody in Pniel' ...

Oral history related how Pniel was divided with its own type of colour-based division, geographically and in a sense metaphorically, divided by the church yard. Most of the descendents of mixed parents (such as white farmers and slaves) had a very light skin complexion. They lived in the upper part of the town, above the church and were called the *Kloofers*. They were a little bit wealthier and enjoyed more opportunities than the rest of the town.

Most of the other people were descendents of Mozambicans (Masbiekers) or Mallagassy people and lived on the other side, below the church, in the older part of the village. They had a darker complexion and were mostly farm labourers of low income, often with relatives living on Boschendal¹². They were called the *Onderstraters* or the *Le Fleurs*. Today, the people are more integrated but according to one resident, 'the mindsets of our forefathers are carried through generationally and thus the Kloofers descendents are more 'jolly' and 'go getters' while the Le Fleurs are more reserved- stemming from fear that they would be evicted from their land' (Pniel resident, my translation 2006.04.07). Even today the divide is still a reality for many. One man in his 30's recalled how he was prohibited to date girls from the 'other side'. The church was built in the shape of a cross. The Kloofers sat in the top pews while the rest sat in *die gat* (the hole). Today the social divide is not that relevant anymore, yet the older generation still sits in this way. One Le Fleur stated that even today, 'the Kloofers are always late. They won't enter the church until the organ starts to play' (Pniel resident, my translation 2006.04.07).

The following statement reflected the strong unofficial 'rules' for citizenship in Pniel:

'Pniel and the church¹³ are one. Citizenship in Pniel is synonymous with church membership. In order to truly understand the community you have to become one with it. Thus, in order to truly understand Pniel, you have to be part of the church. People from other denominations and churches are seen as *inkommers*. Here, daughters become like mothers and sons become like their fathers.'

(Pniel resident and mother, my translation 2008.05.08).

¹² Boschendal is a wine farm, previously owned by Anglo American, from which many Pniel, Kylemore and Lanquedoc residents earned their income.

¹³ The Congregational Church.

During my fieldwork, residents matter-of-factly stated how everyone knew everyone and how most people in Pniel were related somehow. Due to the strict rules and closeness of the community throughout the years, Pniel boasted strong unofficial conditions for citizenship. It used to be hard to get access to land and become part of Pniel and many Pnielers explained that locals seldom left the village to settle elsewhere. People held strong opinions about who could be considered as a *Pnieler* and who couldn't. If you weren't born in Pniel, it was a social challenge to become accepted in the community.

A man in his 50s who married a lady from Pniel many years ago explained how he played around with his *inkommer* and 'local' identity. It seemed that if you were an *inkommer* at some stage, you would always jump around between being a local and an *inkommer* depending on the situation. He saw himself as an *inkommer* or a local, depending on the setting or context of the discussion. Another resident told me that if you were not a full-blooded Pnieler, you had to be cunning when you wanted to have your voice heard. He would voice his opinion through someone who was born and raised there. Since only one of his parents was originally from Pniel, he was convinced that his opinion counted less during discussions or meetings, 'even if you say exactly the same thing as someone born in Pniel, they would not listen to you. So rather let a local voice your opinion during a meeting' (Pniel resident, my translation 2007.09.13).

If we consider one of the points of departure of Encounter revealed in the quote below, Encounter proposed to break clean from an exclusivity-mindset:

'The difference between Encounter and the other churches is that Encounter makes no race discrimination. Indian, coloured, black, white or anybody is welcome. As long as you have blood flowing in your veins and that blood is the Blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ. Pniel is a very colour dominated area, coloureds tend to look out for each other. Encounter purposes to sensitize the town to the idea of mixed races standing in unity. African pastors from Nigeria and Kenya and white ministers from Gauteng often visit and lead the meetings. In this way the community is exposed to alternative forms of worship and community'.

(Young pastor at Encounter 2006.11.20).

In Chapter Five I go into more detail about the emphasis placed on a new identity in Christ advocated at Encounter. In relation to the above mentioned quote, the exposure to *inkommers* and people from another class and/or race can threaten to override the solidarity and unique church identity of many Pniel residents.

Since membership to the Congregational Church was so synonymous with a legitimate voice in village matters, Encounter members often retained their membership of the traditional church. Encounter leaders were not guaranteed a powerful voice in official village matters due to its radical religious nature foreign to traditional village life. However, since the owner and his family were originally from Pniel, they did enjoy some favour with other residents despite not agreeing with some of each other's fundamental religious practices. But more about the way in which Encounter differed from the traditional church follows in Chapter Five.

3.2.3 Leisure for unity

When people stand united, a sense of group identity and security could develop out of the unity. In Pniel, many people commented on the important function of leisure activities in stimulating unity amongst the villagers. The most efficient activity was the sport rugby. However, as the examples below reveal, there were some other leisure activities that served to stimulate inter-class and religious interaction. The relevance of this section becomes clearer after understanding the contradicting effects Encounter had in village social life. Due to the entertainment characteristic of Encounter's nights many people from various social classes and income groups were drawn together in unity. At the same time, however, Encounter created a break in the religious unity which many local residents enjoyed as faithful members of the traditional churches.

'In Pniel there are no societies explicitly focused on providing entertainment and leisure. The existent societies are either linked to church organizations or to the economic circumstances of the community' (Louw, my translation 1950:160). 'Organized forms of leisure for the youth are limited or non-existent' (Louw, my translation 1950:161).

As long ago as the 1950s, the need for organized leisure in Pniel was already a sensitive issue. Until recent years, the *bioskoop* (movie theatre) was the central entertainment area in Pniel. Its location was central to town and close to the church grounds. One resident reminisced about how personal differences were put aside there and people socialised 'cross-class' while together enjoying the entertainment. When this place was

transformed into a fruit packing store, the last form of organized leisure, apart from sport, was removed from the valley. The last form of organized leisure was the sports clubs. Today, the Pniel Villagers RFC has existed for nearly 106 years and according to A. Cyster, 'in Pniel rugby is actually a second religion' (SABC 3 2004).

Today, after the close of the *bioskoop* locals are disappointed that there has not been something to replace it as a meaningful, unifying centre of entertainment. Some strong rules endorsed by the church and church management prohibited dancing and the use of alcohol in Pniel. Even on special request it was rarely granted to the residents. In recent years the central area of entertainment was the Pniel Plaza or the Samburgh Hotel, People referred back to the place with mixed feelings. Most interviewees said it was a place of immorality where the booze overflowed and the devil lurked, while others longingly referred back to it.

The lack of leisure was one of the explanations that regularly surfaced in conversations about the presence of Tik in the valley. In the past, it was the *bioskoop* that served as a kind of platform for social cooperation between different classes. After the Samburgh Hotel was recently transformed into a youth entertainment centre (Encounter), the last form of organized entertainment in Pniel, apart from sport, closed down. However, Encounter organized its meetings in such a way that it was appealing to the average desperate entertainment seeker. In Chapter Five I will discuss the nature of this 'entertainment' in further detail. The 'catch', however, is that the entertainment comes wrapped in a 'Pentecostal package'. The effect was that many people were drawn to the live music but were reserved about the 'excessive' expression associated with dance and disco expressed as an act of religious worship.

The unity of the village was grounded in church culture and tradition. As we shall see in the upcoming chapter, Encounter effected change in the set routines of many of its loyal members.

3.2.4 Change – and the fear of it

'I was born and raised in Pniel. Our parents, we, are too conservative. We don't believe in change. We fear change. We believe our children have to go to the same church, the same services as we. We mustn't change. The parents know the sermons of their own churches, but Encounter is different so they don't trust it' (Pniel resident 2008.05.08).

This comment reflected the sentiments of many parents in Pniel concerning the alternative form of religious practice (Pentecostal worship) at Encounter. Many older Pniel residents referred back to the traditional religion they grew up with as being very *eng* (conservatively strict and uptight) and more of a *bangmaakgodsdienst* (fear-driven religion), emphasising the fear of hell. There were also people who still believed that women should not wear make-up or pants. Elsewhere, many churches have tried to capture the youth culture but it was seldom long-lasting. The links with strong tradition was injuring church relevance for the youth since the traditional churches have historically been more focused on the older generation.

'Encounter is not being received very well in Pniel. In the past there have been similar movements that started and it never lasts! Many of the youth are advised by their parents not to go. 95% of the community usually crucify these movements. The parents don't like change, they don't need change. They want their kids to follow in their footsteps' (Pniel resident 2008.05.08).

3.3 Kylemore and Lanquedoc: recent economic development and change



Figure 3.2 A neighbourhood in Kylemore

Kylemore was founded in 1898 when 25 residents from Pniel and Johannesdal bought parts of the farms Zorgvliedt, Eensaamheid and Rust en Vrede¹⁴.

When Lanquedoc was founded, Cecil John Rhodes had Herbert Baker design houses built for people with the agreement that they had to come and work on the farms. Thus, the residents of Lanquedoc were bound to farm labour and their children had to leave school to work on the farms at the age of thirteen. The only place they could go to for further schooling was in Paarl and their income wasn't sufficient for the transport so they entered the work world at an early age. The people from Pniel had more options. They had the choice whether to keep their children in school or to let them work on the farms.

'Farming in this area (*the DRV*) has undergone important changes in the last few decades: generally there was a decrease in the number of farm workers, due to mechanisation, but also because of the changes in property relations that had emerged after 1994 and had become a threat to many land owners'.

(Van der Waal 2005:4).

These changes resulted in less work but more labourers as more people continued to move into the valley in pursuit of work on the new developments. 'The sale of this piece of cultural heritage (*Boschendal*) could mean big spatial changes for the DRV and it would affect the inhabitants of the valley as well in terms of employment and development initiatives' (Daemen 2006:83). Displacement during 2004 resulted in many farm workers (Boschendal, Anglo Fruit Farms) being moved from their houses on the farms to Lanquedoc. The plan was to develop the other farms for the overseas tourist market by building hotels, hiking trails, etc. Many workers lost their jobs and didn't qualify according to the Lanquedoc Housing Association's regulations for new homes. Out of necessity, they moved into the community hall and for many months this disrupted the social life of, not only those in the hall, but also many other inhabitants in the village (Daemen 2006:74; Van der Waal 2005:1).

In 2003 Anglo American Farms' sale of Boschendal, a large wine farm, required that many farm workers had to give up their houses and move off the farm and move into Lanquedoc into houses provided by the state-subsidised housing scheme¹⁵. A large BEE organization called Kovacs Investments bought Boschendal and the associated farms.

¹⁴ There is some confusion as to the origin of the name. Kyle means *kloof* (valley or mountain). And More, or moor means *uitsig* (view). According to some, the previous owner of the farm was called Kyle and the new owners decided to name the place after him. 'More' is like a green shrubby watery area and that was added to describe the area. A different story is that a man named Kyle rode there on his horse Moor and fell off and named the place Kylemore.

¹⁵ For a more thorough study on the Lanquedoc Housing Scheme see *Development Complexity: Studying resettlement in Lanquedoc* by Louw, 2006.

Included in the transaction were the prospects of high percentages of job creation for the farm workers who were to be moved off the land that would become available for property development. The problem though, came after the workers' three or four month contract was done. Then the unskilled job of laying foundations was done and the rest of the work required skills. The promise of job creation was thus fulfilled but the job was over after three months and then the worker lost everything and had no more work. The timeframe and budget which the developers determined did not cater for equipping or training unskilled labourers. Instead, they simply made use of outsiders causing a major influx of workers and more competition for work. Again, the influx of workers from the outside caused a lot of dissatisfaction among the local residents. They blamed the increase of crime and drugs on these outsiders. Many outsiders came in for contract work but ended up settling in the villages. These changes contributed to the levels of uncertainty amongst local citizens.

Another 'job creating' project was the building of a big dam at Franschoek in the Bergwater project. The problem, though, was that the jobs that were created often required skilled labour and there were few such people in Lanquedoc. Thus, they got people from outside to fill posts such as engineers, etc. '...since the initiation of the project the valley saw the emergence of opportunists and organizations with no support and no track record in the local communities...' (BSDI 2006:4).

A common concern was that many people weren't necessarily aware of all the developments that were taking place around them. Thus, they couldn't possibly anticipate or prepare for the manner in which it could influence them. Community meetings were organised where locals could voice and discuss their concerns. The problem with these meetings was that as little as five people sometimes pitched up for the meetings. That was hardly a big enough representation to have a sufficient influence on the development of things. The majority of the local people either lacked interest or remained ignorant of the scope of what was happening around them. Thus, many of the people who were trying to make a difference finally adopted an attitude of adaptation and acceptance that the development and its effects were inevitable. My point is that large scale developments led to large scale changes in the valley which not only affected the local culture, it also resulted in shifts in social class dynamics. New people meant new religions, languages and the desire to engage with the already existing religious and social organizations present in the valley. Many residents in Pniel, Kylemore and Lanquedoc were overwhelmed by these changes.

3.4 Conclusion

The strong controlling nature of the traditional church in history discussed above, helped to explain the context wherein Encounter with its anti-tradition sentiment came into being. The large scale developments discussed can shape our understanding around the sudden growth of Encounter membership (see Chapter Five). The economic development led to vast changes and increasing dissatisfaction and possibly insecurity for many local residents. Not only did these changes play a role in affecting class dynamics among the local farm and contract workers, it also influenced family structures and contributed to the state of crisis concerning the youth. It is in situations such as these that people are more susceptible to the strong economic security, personal purpose and identity addressing meetings of religious movements. Before explaining the extent of the impact of religion in times of uncertainty in Chapter Five, I described the extent of the youth crisis and non-religious youth interventions in the DRV in Chapter Four.

4. YOUTH CRISIS AND LOCAL RESPONSES

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I highlighted the strong traditional nature of the church and the recent developments in the valley. In this chapter I focus in detail on one of the major problems concerning the youth in the valley: Tik. Tik was a drug that was increasing in popularity among the youth, not only in the DRV but all over the Western Cape. There existed various initiatives in the valley aimed at youth development at the time of this research. I look here at some of these initiatives and in the next chapter Encounter is discussed in detail. It is relevant to understand that Encounter is not the first and only movement that originated with the main aim of youth development. However, the spiritual nature of Encounter's practical problem prevention actions made it different from the existing initiatives in the valley.

4.2 Youth crisis in the DRV

Needless to say that since 1917, when the Congregational Church became the official church in Pniel, a lot has changed in the valley. Laws have changed and the larger influence of more religions in the valley has influenced the solidarity of this predominantly Christian mission station. The new BEE ownership of Boschendal and other developments in the valley have led to an influx of workers into the DRV. Some locals called these workers *inkommers* or 'outsiders' and many residents distrust them. Some people blamed them for bringing destructive things such as drugs and crime into the valley (Van der Waal 2005:1). At the same time, new religious movements mushroomed in the valley, especially in Kylemore where there were seven established churches. However, one of the biggest challenges that faced the residents of these four villages was the social problems of their youth.

The youth situation in the DRV has been described as being in a state of desperation. Some local explanations for the crisis included: the *dop system*, lack of morals, lack of role models, drug abuse exposure in the homes and a decline of parent involvement and interest in the social lives of their children.

‘The biggest problem with the youth today is a moral problem. Morals and values are in decline. When the parents were young they spent their time playing games like *wegkruipertjie* (hide and seek), *blikaspaai* (local game) and marbles. Quality time was spent between parents and children. Today there is lack of communication and involvement.’

(Teacher working at Kylemore High School, my translation 2007.03.07).

Some parents reflectively stated that they didn’t give enough attention to their kids. A father from Pniel said that he recently started initiating their family meals around a table again. They had become so used to eating in front of the television, he said, that he and the kids rarely had decent conversation.

‘We used to have stay-awakes and play games. In the olden days it went a lot better with the youth. They had respect for their elders and they had moral values. They wouldn’t even light up their cigarettes in front of elders. Older people could ask a youth passing by their house to quickly run to the store for them and they would do it without a second thought. They still knew how to say please and thank you. Today, it is all about their personal rights and a common response from them is ‘who are you to tell me what to do?’

(Concerned mother from Kylemore, my translation 2006.05.31).

This statement reveals both the concern of parents about the lack of respect among youth as well as the older generation’s struggle to let go of a set-understanding of ‘how things should be’ despite changing times. The youth, according to a certain minister, didn’t have a very impressive history of church involvement. Due to the strong social role of the church and its Christian heritage, religion played a central role in the daily functions and culture of Pniel. It was inseparable from the social rules that governed the village and parents expected their kids to embrace religious activities like they used to. However, the youth were becoming less and less interested in the traditional church activities and functions that served to shape the older generation’s lives.

In Kylemore, a Neighbourhood Watch spokesman said that the youth caused their biggest problems. There were many reasons attributed to the increase of their restlessness. One of the main ones and most practically addressable, was the issue of boredom. People complained about a lack of recreational and leisure activities for the youth in the valley. One Tik user blamed the older generation for being responsible for the state of the youth in the valley.

There used to be a *jol* (disco or dance hall) and a games room. He said 'the church must take the blame because it was the *dominee* (preacher) who took the entertainment away. Some kids play rugby but many of them use Tik as well, even while playing' (25 year old ex-addict, my translation 2007.08.25).

Some older established activities included the sports clubs, the youth brigade, the choir and other church-based events. However, many of these things were run by the older generation, some of the established traditions thus needed to be renewed in order to be relevant to the youngsters. Many found the choir and marching band *vervelig* (boring and out of date). The result was that many children played games at the *smokkelhuise* (liquor dealer's house) or *shebeens* (informal taverns) since these places offered some form of entertainment. There, many were exposed to alcohol abuse and sometimes violence.

On top of all of this, the most challenging problem that faced the youth in the DRV was a drug called Tik. In the next section I discuss the nature, origin and major effect this drug had on the youth in the DRV. Over the past few years Tik has been the cause of many broken relationships, dysfunctional families, increased crime and the destruction of individual lives in the Dwars River Valley.

4.3 The social life of Tik

Tik is a person, a power. If you use Tik, you become the person.

(Ex addict and current independent Christian youth minister in Pniel, my translation).

4.3.1 What is Tik?

Meth, Speed, Crystal, Ice, Choeff and Tik are a few of the street names used for the latest, fastest spreading street drug in South Africa. Although currently being the most popular, Tik, or methamphetamine was not actually a new drug on the market. During WWII it was medically available in a less potent form: amphetamine. It was legally sold as medication to help with weight loss, depression, as an energy boost etc (KATSG Tik Document 2006). Doctors soon realized the destructive quality of its continued use and the drug became illegal after already producing numerous amounts of addicts in the USA and throughout the world. An easily obtainable and strong energy-enhancing hallucinogen, Tik was recently rapidly corrupting and threatening the potential of many in the next adult generation in South Africa.

Research about Tik in Cape Town during 2004 showed that ‘most users were male, 81% were coloured and the average age was just 20 years old’ (Caelers 2004). The demand for treatment was rapidly rising and near the end of 2007 the number of Tik addicts overtook the number of alcoholics¹⁶ seeking help at rehabilitation centers. In the Western Cape Tik has been reported as the drug causing the fastest increase in addiction over the shortest period of time in the world.

Tik has no scent and its ingredients consist of legal medication and items available at chemists and in public stores. This, along with the fact that its recipe was circulating globally on the Internet, frustrated the attempts to curb its increase. In its powder form, Tik was most commonly heated in a light bulb while the user inhaled the fumes, expecting a *rush* of about 6 hours followed by a *high* that could last up to three days. During this time users often struggled to or forgot to eat and sleep. When a person was on Tik, it was very hard for an uninformed person to notice the symptoms immediately. Tik had no recognizable smell and short-term effects were less visible and noticeable. Hyperactivity, rapid speech with often unfinished sentences and increased confidence were symptoms of Tik. A resident recalled some police stories of how ‘the kids argue like lawyers when they are confronted and when they steal or break into homes they act like James Bond taking their ‘missions’ very seriously. When girls are under the influence, they feel like models and become easy targets for men’ (Pniel father 2007.08.24). However, despite the heightened alertness and smooth talk, when hallucinations, bad trips (when smoked with *dagga*¹⁷) or an overdose occurred, users could appear to be losing their minds. One youth worker in Kylemore commented that ‘Tik affects their brains... they wear unmatching shoes, their eyes roll over and some run around and laugh out loud’ (Kylemore youth worker 2007.09.13).

The current version of the drug is said to be the most potent and most addictive. The quality of Tik varied and many desperate addicts played guinea pig to homemade attempts with often fatal consequences. In a mere five years time its street price in South Africa fell from R500 to R300 to R200 all the way down to between R40 and R20 for a *hit* or a *straw*.

¹⁶ Alcohol has historically been the most common habit-forming substance used in the Western Cape. Especially amongst rural neighbourhoods and farm workers, the consequences of addiction are numerous social problems such as domestic violence, working incompetence, crime and ill health.

¹⁷ Weed

4.3.2 Responses and challenges

There were various elements complicating the eradication let alone the control and monitoring of this drug. Treatment facilities were overbooked. The Cape Town Drug Counseling Centre, the largest treatment centre in the Western Cape had a waiting list that stretched over weeks. *Toevlug* is a Christian based rehabilitation centre where some kids from the DRV have been sent to. However, on the third weekend of their treatment, patients were sent home and if they 'fell' during this time they were not allowed to return to the centre. According to a Kylemore informant active amongst the youth, most kids fell during this time, they came home and just kind of picked up where they left off with Tik.

'When it comes to dealing with this drug, people either don't want to take part in programs or they are scared or in most cases they just don't care. The time has indeed come for us to stop wondering and start doing'.

(KATSG document on TIK 2006:1).

The police were not coping with the rapid increase of drug problems either. They were constantly under strong critique from the public for not living up to their role of keeping the neighbourhoods safe and crime-free. The result of incompetent governance, politics and insufficient resources was that parents, non-government (most often religious) organizations and ex-addicts stepped forward and become the key players in prevention action and public protests (Barnes and Esbach 2007:6). These role-players have organized various anti-drug marches in places like Mitchell's Plain, Manenberg and Kylemore. Through these initiatives whole communities have marched upon the houses of 'suspected' drug dealers with ultimatums threatening mass action if the dealers wouldn't cooperate with their terms. However, even these attempts were problematized by residents who refused to offer information and evidence on dealers for fear of their lives. Many residents were also either ignorant of the extent of the problem or not interested to get involved if they were not immediately affected by the problem.



Figure 4.1 'Stop your destruction you Tik devil' Kylemore anti-Tik march (2007.04.14).



Figure 4.2 Kylemore anti-Tik march (2007.04.14).

4.3.3 Why Tik?

‘...the effects of the drug – confidence, energy and a sense of power – dovetailed exactly with the adolescent state and what youngsters saw as ‘lacking’ in their lives... ‘Adolescence is a time when youngsters find their role in society changing. They have more responsibility and sexuality becomes a factor. These changes often result in lack of confidence and awkwardness. Tik counteracts this, giving them a sense of power and confidence’.

(Caelers 2004).

An ex-user explained the power of the drug as follows:

‘If you think it, you become it depending on the thought you have. For example, if you think you want to go drink some water then you go and drink some water. But under the influence people think bigger things and then they go and do it...’

(Anonymous 1, Pniel boy (21) battling to quit the habit, my translation).

Many people used Tik because it was a level ‘up’ from *dagga* and they were eager for a more intense *high*. Some of the most common explanations given for the high number of users in the valley were peer pressure and difficult household circumstances. Lack of role models, lack of motivation, boredom and the absence of sufficient leisure activities also featured high on the cause-list. Some people blamed the farm owners for the current crises with the youth. They were convinced that all their current social problems were the bad fruits stemming from the ‘*dop system*’¹⁸ as the root cause. Many residents were convinced that it was the *inkommers* who brought the drugs and the crime into the valley. However, Kylemore had six known dealers and it is common knowledge that most of the drugs came from Kayamandi, Kraaifontein and Elsie'srivier.

Some current users gave their ideas about why Tik was so popular amongst the youth:

‘Tik makes you strut. You’re not afraid of anything. You are fluent, you go as you go, you do whatever you want. It’s all about you, not about others. Also a little dangerous like that... Tik makes you feel like a king’.

(Anonymous 1, Pniel boy (21) battling to quit the habit, my translation).

¹⁸ The *dop system* was a system of payment used by farm owners to ‘pay’ their farm workers by supplying alcohol instead of monetary income (www.nlsa.ac.za).

‘I think in our lives today young people don’t know what to do with their young lives’.

(Anonymous 2, Kylemore boy (22) battling to quit the habit, my translation).

‘Circumstances eg. peer pressure, loneliness, problems (household)’.

(Anonymous 3, Meerlust boy (18) battling to quit the habit, my translation).

One adult who grew up in Pniel said that many kids experienced traumatic events at young ages and never got the skills or opportunities to deal with it ‘professionally’. They just ‘swallowed’ it and continued and then years later they needed to get it out or ‘deal’ with it and then resorted to things like drugs, promiscuous lifestyles or petty crime. These traumatic events included domestic violence and substance abuse, sexual abuse and other acts of violence. The lack of role models made it hard for youngsters to swallow any advice given by the older generation. They have been disillusioned by adults, parents, religious leaders and other significant influential people who *don’t practice what they preach* (young Pnieler, 25, battling to quit the habit 2007.08.25). Many children who were referred to as being orphaned did in fact have at least one parent alive but they were mostly not even acknowledged due to substance or physical abuse, the children then identified themselves as unwanted children.

It is important to note though, that not all the kids who suffered under challenging circumstances got mixed up in criminal activity or turned to drugs for solace. Many of the regular Tik users came from wealthy homes with many opportunities. The reasons given for their resort to drugs included the lack of involvement of parents in their lives and peer pressure. Drugs were a reality and teachers have commented that it was the parents who needed to wake up. Teachers at the schools were expected to discipline children but when they did that, the parents couldn’t believe that it was their own children causing the trouble and often denial led to inaction. This made the task of curbing this drug all the more problematic.

‘The community discards the Tik users. They often tell them to ‘f*ck off’ or criticize them saying ‘*julle jaag al weer k*k aan*’. They get their acceptance within their group – however, gangsterism has not taken root in the valley. The community *skel* (scold) the kids. Kids would also rather not associate with Tik users since they fear they will also come under suspicion’.

(Kylemore resident (2007.09.13), my translation).

A major issue was that most people didn't want to be associated with *Tikkies*. From the moment that a kid was suspected of doing Tik, rumours often spread and the kid became stigmatized. People, especially the older generation, tended to badmouth the Tik users and the result was that users often didn't know where to turn to if they wanted to quit or seek help. During my fieldwork I asked a user whether it helped to talk and he said that it helped to talk. He said that 'the only people you can talk to about the drug itself and its effects are the people who use it themselves. I don't know of anywhere or anyone I can go to talk about my problems, I can't go to these people (*people from the local church*). It could help if there were people but then they mustn't tell us to stop doing it, they mustn't criticize us because that would only make us angry. Rather, they can tell us about the bad effects of Tik and that it is wrong. What is even worse', he said, 'is that people who have never used the drug or drugs try to talk to us and tell us how it is and should be'.

There was thus a strong desire expressed by some addicts to be able to talk about their problem without the fear of being criticized. The desire was for people to listen rather than rebuke. Today, just about every church in the valley has a youth group with people specifically devoted to the spiritual and social well-being of the youth. At least in intention and on paper... A visit to a youth evening at a church in Kylemore ended after about 30 minutes due to the lack of youth attendance.

Yet, the churches were still unanimous in claiming that they had a tremendous task ahead in reaching the youth and keeping them 'off the streets'. The surprisingly large number of different churches in the valley made this task more difficult, though. Organizational distrust and the failure of unity in past joint-ventures were blamed for complicating the prospect of successful unity in tackling this crisis. Another problematic factor was that many of the church members have not fully grasped the magnitude of the problem facing their youth. Tik was not yet a reality to many of those who were not directly affected on a personal level. Thus, the urgency for counter- and preventive action was not shared by everybody.

4.3.4 Youth plays: The reality of life re-enacted

One of the most direct reflections of the perceived reality through the eyes of youngsters in the valley was revealed through dramas performed at youth gatherings. The following excerpt describes the events at a specific youth night service at Encounter. The proceedings of the evening were given entirely to the youth to run.

The rest of the night was hosted by two young girls dressed in orange overalls. They were rapping and ripping¹⁹ each other. They ran the whole program. The evening was filled with the youth acting out plays about their social realities and about how God changed their lives. They also had some individual acts and the choir sang a few songs, but the main events of the evening were the plays. The themes addressed in these dramas included teenage pregnancy, tik/drugs, domestic violence, homosexuality, peer pressure, adultery, unwanted children and suicide.

After the plays, a girl stepped forward and explained that they were given freedom to choose whatever topic they wanted for the plays. So, they decided to re-enact real life situations which many of them faced on a daily basis. Then they emphasized the positive change Jesus brought in their lives. She explained how many of them used to roam the streets at night, until the people from Encounter started driving around in the evenings to pick up the wandering youths. They were brought to Encounter where they were kept busy with 'healthy' pastimes. Through these dramas, a firsthand glimpse was revealed of the social conditions faced by many of the youth in the valley and these plays portrayed the reality of the world as perceived through their eyes.

(Fieldnotes 09.09.2006).

Not only did the social circumstances, revealed through the plays, stimulate many youth to find solace in Tik, but these circumstances were often the result of Tik addiction. Many families had one addict who eventually sold the family's possessions, brought violence into the house or broke family relationships.

Another example of real life plays was during a spiritual camp organized by a men and ladies residence from Maties²⁰. They took 150 Grade 10s from Kylemore High on a camp to Llandudno Beach in Cape Town.

Many of the kids saw Table Mountain and the sea for the first time in their lives. It was opportunities such as these that many parents and youth workers desired for the youngsters. By exposing them to more opportunities and through the contact they experienced with students who studied and were from different races, some realized for the first time that they might also consider to go and study one day.

¹⁹ Playfully making fun of each other in a comical manner.

²⁰ Maties is the colloquial name for the University of Stellenbosch.

On this camp the youth was also given the opportunity to perform plays. There was no prescription as to what their topics should be. According to one of the camp leaders, most plays contained or themes involving alcohol and fighting scenes where people punched at each other, some had cross-dressers and most involved flirting with the opposite sex. The humorous atmosphere blanketed the factual content and undertones of harsh social realities most kids were faced with in their daily lives.

4.4 Churches and local initiatives: practical responses to social problems

A sore point for the school was the lack of financial support from the provincial education department...Contractor Garden Cities was instrumental in the building of the hall, providing the bulk of the funding. Fund-raising efforts and generous donations from various sponsors also helped...But they (the education department) did not even give us a cent.

(Esbach 2007:6).

This Manenberg primary school recently opened its first community hall to be used for recreational activities. It was the first of its kind and was not restricted to the use of the school. Private funding and local initiatives to address social needs and problems in semi-rural communities in South Africa is a common occurrence. In many ways the government has failed to adequately address, let alone stop the spread of increased poverty, crime and the effects thereof in the lives of numerous post-apartheid South African communities

In this section I briefly discuss some local initiatives and events organized by citizens, churches and organizations in the DRV. I don't claim at all to have covered all the existing forms of developmental responses to social problems in the DRV. The examples discussed here are specifically those that address, among other things, the needs of the youth in the valley. I am aware that there exist more such cases than the examples used here, however, for the purpose of this study I found these examples to be representative of the overall situation.

As the above section indicated, there was a great need for involvement in the lives of the youth to equip them for the future task of not only leading this country, but also leading their own lives and those of their families and children. One common characteristic of these examples was the practicality and reasonability behind their interventions. The prevention strategies against problems as well as the alternative activities for leisure were all practical and tangible. Some were faith-based, yet the spiritual significance was

not verbally advocated in the same manner as the examples which will be discussed in the next chapter.

4.4.1 The Kylemore Anti-tik Support Group (KATSG)

This group originated as a local initiative in response to the social problems caused by Tik in Kylemore. All the churches in the valley were invited to send representatives to the opening meeting but not a single one responded. It was meant to be interdenominational and thus nondenominational. This again just revealed the big challenge facing those in favour of joint ventures. The majority of the people attending these meetings were mothers and their young children as well as family members of Tik-users. While discussing the damage the drug was causing to the younger generation, the chairperson of KATSG explained that it was not a question of whether they wanted to do something or not, they *had* to start something- they had no choice.

‘All the organisations are run by older people. These older people are going to pass away and if we don’t look after the youth there will be no one left to run the organisations because the youth is in a crisis. Many of the babies born to Tickers (‘Tikbabas’) are handicapped. This enlarges the generation-gap and leaves us with the question of who will manage the future of the valley?’.

(Chairperson of KATSG 2007.06.12).

The main focus of this group was to create a general awareness amongst the local residents about the realities of Tik. The chairperson explained that there was too little help in place for parents or other people to recognise the symptoms and red lights if they themselves had never used Tik or had never directly been involved with people using the drug. If people were caught using it, they were normally sent to rehabilitation centres or to jail, but the question KATSG asked the community was: *What happened to those kids when they came back?* Awareness was necessary to change the society and the environment. When they returned to the valley, the area needed to be welcoming for them to be able to embrace a new life, removed from the previous temptations and not to return to their old ways.

Unfortunately, it seemed that those people in the position to make changes did not want to climb on board of the project. Thus, the primary goal of KATSG was *Awareness*. At KATSG they tried to make people aware of the problem so that they could realise that they needed to get on board.

Most ex-addicts interviewed emphasised the importance of the fact that Tik-users rarely listened to people who had not experienced the ills of addiction themselves. Thus, KATSG organized for ex-Tik users to come and give their testimonies so that those present could learn from the mistakes these people had made. Their main approach was a preventative one because their main target was those who hadn't used Tik yet. The rationale was explained to be that if a child saw then he or she could make an informed decision for him- or herself. The long-term goal was to start a rehabilitation centre in the DRV. The challenge they faced was to gain people's interest since most people who were not directly affected were reluctant to get involved.

4.4.2 Youth groups: churches and sport

The most organized youth activity in the Valley, outside of the sport clubs, seemed to be the Girls and Boys brigade of the Congregational Church at Pniel. One resident recalled how the Boys Brigades from former mission stations in Franschhoek, Jamestown, Genadendal and Pniel gathered together on Founders Day 1987 to form a marching line so long, you couldn't see the front and the back at the same time. It used to serve as a potential unifying activity.

In 2006, a Kylemore teacher started a netball club for the women on the surrounding farms. She used to work at the primary school and was involved in youth netball. She applied for a R10 000 sports development grant from Maties Netball²¹ for Kylemore primary school. They received the funds and twice a week for about seven weeks, girls from the Maties netball club along with Champions for Christ (CFC) workers taught netball and life skills²² to the girls after school. These sessions were characterized by interested little boys hanging around the courts enquiring as to when they were going to get a chance to have rugby clinics. The ultimate aim with these sessions was to teach the local teachers how to continue with the life skills and the physical training after the CFC people would have left. This was less successful though since only a minority of the teachers showed enough interest. The kids however loved the sessions and months thereafter continued to ask for the CFC people to come back next season.

During school hours there were lots of activities where kids could get involved: culture groups, debating, choir, etc. However, most activities ended after school hours except for sports practice.

²¹ Maties Netball is a sports club part of Stellenbosch University.

²² Life skills included topics such as self-worth, leadership, teamwork, identity, values and respect.

Out of 900 pupils, the high school only had four rugby teams. This proved that not all kids were keen on sports. There was a need for alternative activities. The school also had a Bible study group where kids had the opportunity to talk about the pressures they faced in their lives. Sometimes people came in to lead them in praise and worship songs. Many of the kids seemed to enjoy this. Yet, not all kids were religious so the need still existed for alternative, fun leisure.

4.3.3 Youth camps: the Community Police Forum (CPF) and Maties

The Community Police Forum has organized youth camps and meetings in order to discuss the youth. Among other things, they educated the kids about the dangers involved in drugs. At the same time, they tried to get the kids to tell them what they wanted for entertainment, anything to keep them busy with positive things and keep them out of the *shebeens* and off the streets.

In August 2006 they took 10 kids from each school in the valley, most of them 'problem' children. They came from all over the valley: Kylemore, Pniel, Simondium, Groot Drakenstein and Lanquedoc. On this camp they gave them a mixture of adventure, life skills and, being Christian orientated, it also contained some spiritual input. I attended a feedback session of this camp. Roughly forty children gathered in the Encounter hall²³ about two months after the camp. Here they had the opportunity to report back on how they have been doing since the camp and how the camp had impacted their lives.

²³ Encounter makes its hall available for useful and positive youth-focused activities.



Figure 4.3 After the feedback meeting they played games with the kids in the hall (2006.08.05).

They were asked to share what they remembered, enjoyed and learned about at the camp. The kids were quiet and shy but gradually a few individuals put their hands up and started participating. They recalled various topics such as drugs, obedience, respect for themselves and their parents and each other, entrepreneurship, etc. They gave feedback on the various life skills they learned about. And as they answered, the men encouraged them and added to their answers with more questions and explanations about how, for example, respect was earned and not given. Then they gave an example of how a little boy swore at his principal and how another boy threatened to sue his own father who wanted to correct him. And this boy was on the same camp the previous year. Thus, they wanted to establish with the children that the things they learned on the camp had to be lasting, and not temporary.

In order to understand the needs and interests of the kids, the next period was spent trying to find out what the children enjoyed doing with their spare time. They tried to find out what the kids enjoyed doing over weekends. '*Rook julle rot?*' (do you smoke 'rat' or weed?). The ever present aim always seemed to be to try and understand the youth culture in order to provide for their leisure and development needs. The CPF used valuable time and resources for youth development.

They probed the kids with ideas, 'art and music, culture, hiking?' They emphasized that transport should never be a problem since they offer transport from in and outside the valley. One of the kids eventually dared a suggestion: Karaoke, concerts. The men acknowledged that when they were young, it was easier for them because they had a *bioskoop*/movie theatre, they spent lots of time hiking in the mountains, etc. Ultimately, they were trying to create an environment so desirable, that kids would be reluctant to miss out, making activities accessible to all.

Not only did they want to keep the kids busy with activities, they also aimed to teach them about norms, values and culture. They asked the kids what their perceptions of white, coloured and black people were: white- rich, coloured- drink, black- they couldn't remember. They hoped to teach them from a young age to respect other cultures.

The men used themselves as testimonies by asking the kids: 'do you think I'd be able to stand here as a successful man if I used drugs/alcohol?' The men represented themselves as examples of success without drugs. Simondium had children as young as 9 years old smoking pot and as young as 12/13 experimenting sexually. Then they recalled a 13 year old boy who gave his testimony after being completely rehabilitated.

After the men addressed the children, a lady took over. She addressed them on a more personal level. She explained to them how they were unique with their own identity and that they were all special. She said, 'you don't know the future or where you will end up, but what you do now will determine and impact that' (CPF feedback meeting 2006.08.05).

She also used her testimony: she grew up in a *drankhuis* (alcohol house) with lots of booze, poverty and fighting. She suffered under her parents' mistakes. She explained that parents weren't the same people when they were drunk and various little heads nodded as they could relate to her stories. She then explained that the decision lay with each one of them. She deliberately decided not to follow in her parents' footsteps. She decided to work hard and finish school and she ended up doing the best in her class. She told them that children should have fun, laugh and be happy. Because that was what children were supposed to do, that was what made them children.

During her address, a small section of the kids started giggling. On enquiring what was so funny, one of the kids told on the others. A girl was sending an sms to another one in another row saying this was *vervelig* (boring).

Instead of correcting the child, the lady started relating to them on their level saying how *kwaai* cell phones were. She pulled out her own 'old fashioned' one to make fun of herself and all the children laughed. She understood the kids and found ways to relate to their world by referring frequently to things like boyfriends, cell phones etc.

As discussed earlier, two men and ladies residences at Maties organized a spiritual activity camp for 150 Grade 10s from Kylemore High. During this camp some kids had the opportunity to talk about their problems and adolescent challenges. Not only did kids deal with personal issues, they were also exposed to different cultures and to more opportunities and places beyond their home environments.

4.3.4 Unofficial initiatives

Some individuals have taken the task of youth development on without the official backup of any movements or organizations. Through networking and sharing their ideas, concerned parents or ambitious individuals have attempted their own forms of youth entertainment.

One such an event took place about once a month at the Pniel municipality offices. When the hall was not booked out, the municipality offered its use, free of charge to anyone who was willing to work with the youth. Like most local initiatives in the DRV, the Christian foundation on which activities were organised were reflected in the motivation of the organizers. The evident challenge of drawing the youth to gatherings and the sudden realization of the extent of the youth crisis meant that the terrain that needed to be explored was still largely undiscovered. It was as though the whole valley was suddenly woken up to this challenge imposing itself on their doorstep. Thus, many of the individual, unofficial initiatives were rich in theory and vision, yet still lacking in practice.

I attended one such meeting on a Saturday morning. I arrived early and had the opportunity to interview the initiator of these meetings himself. The aim, he said, was to accommodate the children. He explained the great need for professionalism in the creation of opportunities for the children to develop their talents. They needed and have tried to do skills training. After finishing school, students struggled to find jobs because they needed skills.

‘Qualification without experience is basically useless. Skills and qualifications are not the same, they are worlds apart. Kids need to learn how to become independent. Ultimately, the goal is to bring the kids to the knowledge and acceptance of God. But they mustn’t find out. The answer does not lie in sermons, but in deeds. The need is to instill true norms and values into the kids’ lives. ‘The kids need to be kept busy. They sit around and do nothing, there are no social activities and even the sports have cliques. It is not about your talents and what you know as much as who you know and who knows you’.

(Independent Youth Worker 2007.08.25).

The event for the evening was to be the showing of a movie. These events were not weekly scheduled. They were aiming towards more regular gatherings and at that stage the invite was also extended my way if I ever wanted to host something for the youth in the hall I was just to ask...

Many of the parents in the valley have verbally given them their blessing, but in effect, they refused to send their own children. Many parents were unwilling or ignorant to see the need in their own homes. Most kids who attended these meetings lived with parents who had alcohol problems. Often there were well dressed kids, but they didn’t leave after the meetings. As became clear after enquiry, they wanted the meetings to go on longer because at home there was a gap between parents and their kids. Often wealthy parents gave their kids large sums of money to spend to keep them busy. The need these youth workers expressed, were for the traditional family ties to be strengthened again. Many kids wanted to change their circumstances, they wanted to live differently but the people they looked up to were their parents and there was no support coming from that area.

4.5. Conclusion

The first half of this chapter was used to discuss the drug Tik and the devastating effects it has had, not only on many of the youth in the DRV, but also as a result on whole families. The tightening grip that Tik had on the youth was one of the major social problems that people in the valley talked about during my fieldwork. The real life situations that were acted out in some of the youth plays gave viewers a glimpse of the challenges many of these kids faced on a daily basis. Since Encounter originated as a youth movement, it was necessary to have Tik and its effects as a focus point during my research. As will be shown in the next chapter, there were kids who stopped using Tik as a direct result of the attention, training and care they received from people at Encounter.

Encounter was not the only youth-focused movement in the valley. In the second half of the chapter I presented some of the local initiatives that have been running with a specific focus on youth development. The practical nature of KATSG, the youth groups, camps and sport made the problem addressable for kids at these meetings. It also showed that many initiatives and groups existed with the same objective. However, the answer to this youth problem did not necessarily lie in new initiatives. The existing establishments and churches admitted that the road to transforming their existing programs and activities into more relevant ones was filled with traditional obstacles. The result was that many fly-by-night initiatives and programmes were launched among the youth. Although receiving very positive responses from the youth, it was rarely sustained. This caused a distrust and underlying hopelessness in the youth. Ultimately they became disinterested in most organized activities. On the other hand, the strong history of tradition in the valley caused many parents to be wary of new youth initiatives. Thus, parents rarely allowed their children to attend other churches' functions.

The permanency of Encounter, the fact that a whole building has been transformed into a youth entertainment centre, drew a wave of young people (and older people) to their meetings. The spiritual nature of the strategies for social problem prevention and solutions followed at Encounter will be explained in the next chapter. I will attempt to unravel why Encounter has successfully drawn so many young people to yet another religious gathering, as well as why this 'success' is criticized and frowned upon by a large portion of the population in the DRV.

5. ENCOUNTER HOUSE OF HOLY SPIRIT FIRE (EHHSF)

5.1 Introduction

Right off the main road slicing through Pniel, a bright red and white sign invites passers-by into the *Encounter Youth Centre*. Flanked by the gym and the old liquor store displaying the signs of the Samburgh Hotel, the new name hanging over the main entrance in large red letters now reads: *Encounter Conference Centre*. In this chapter we look at Encounter in detail in order to understand the social impact it had in the DRV. The first section relates the history and functioning of Encounter while in the second section, we look at the nature of the spiritual activities happening there and why the very presence of Encounter creates a paradox in the DRV.

By studying the history, functioning and spiritual activity of Encounter it became clear that from the very start, although also a Christian church, Encounter followed an alternative path to serving its members than the Congregational Church and other traditional churches. In this chapter I set out to try and understand why Encounter was drawing so many young visitors and how it had such a tremendous effect on the DRV- for some positive, for many negative.



Figure 5.1 Encounter House of Holy Spirit Fire.

5.2 History: 'from disasters to pastors'

The *Encounter Conference Centre* used to be called *The Samburgh Hotel*²⁴ which was a nightclub with a liquor store next door. On weekends the place was filled with people dancing, drinking and partying. The lack of business competition and the wide range of customers they catered for made the club a very popular hang-out.

The free flow of alcohol and the sensual atmosphere in the hotel often led to troublesome consequences and unrest in the community. Many people referred to the Samburgh Hotel as a place where *verkeerde goeters* (wrong things) happened. Incidents of rape, fist fights and accidents due to drunk driving were some of the 'wrong things' that have happened there in the past. Wives often complained with the owner because he let their husbands run tabs at the bar. This led to other damages felt behind closed doors at homes. In some cases it ultimately led to broken families. Thus, although being very popular, many residents complained about the place causing an increasing number of complaining residents.

In 2005, the owner of the property became a Christian at a Pentecostal church outside Pniel. Even though growing up as church-attending Christians, his whole family recalled their true rebirth experiences to have happened in this Pentecostal church. They became involved in the church and grew spiritually to such an extent that it changed their lives and the way they looked at life. During this time, the owner's son played in the church's worship band with a young pastor who studied as one of TB Joshua's²⁵ disciples. Together, they started envisioning a place in Pniel where people could grow spiritually and experience the same freedom they have enjoyed since becoming born-again Christians. With this vision they wanted to start something where they could specifically invest in the lives of the youth in Pniel.

The owner decided to close the pub and after a few months of planning, prayer and preparation, transformed the essence of the building into an entertainment centre for the youth.

²⁴ The Samburgh Hotel goes by many names including the *jo!* meaning something like a party place, the Pniel Plaza, the Samburgh Inn, the Jazz Club etc. depending on who you talk to. The hotel and the gym are still open today, while the rest of the building, including the large dance hall, are used for Encounter activities.

²⁵ TB Joshua is a well-known pastor in Pentecostal circles. He has a prophetic healing ministry in Lagos, Nigeria and has expanded his church over the continent of Africa and the rest of the world. Thousands of people travel to Nigeria yearly to attend his services and to receive healing from fatal ailments such as cancer, paralysis and Aids. Some of the Encounter staff as well as one or two members have visited him in Nigeria for healing and teachings on the Word of God.

With the dart boards, pool tables, big speakers and disco lights from the old pub still in place and with the absence of alcohol, it served as an ideal and relevant non-conservative setting for young people to enjoy. They called it Encounter²⁶.

With the help of a young pastor friend and a worship band from Manenberg they organized an opening night in April 2006. The nature of the event was to be 'new, relevant, exciting and entertaining' (Encounter Pastor 2006.11.20). They followed a deliberate spiritual agenda. The pastor brought a salvation message, the band led everyone in songs and afterwards the party continued with dancing and fellowship. Everyone and anyone were invited.

Oral accounts differ, but it would be safe to say that roughly 600 people came to the event and it was considered to be a huge success. That night, many people gave their lives to Christ and continued to come and bring friends to the Friday evenings after that. From the beginning their focus was primarily on the youth and on the people of Pniel, aiming to 'win souls and then maintain them for the Lord' (Encounter leader 2007.01.26). It soon became clear though, that Encounter was not only relevant to the youth, but that the older generation and people living outside of Pniel were also drawn to their meetings and their message. Soon, the youth meetings started to take on the form of a Pentecostal church service.

After a few months of meetings and steady growth, the young pastor described the motive behind Encounter as follows:

'Encounter is meant to be different from the 'normal' way of doing church. It should be entertaining, relevant and exciting. It should be a place where young people would want to go and have fun. The aim is to never compromise on the Gospel, yet to break it down in such a manner so as to make sense to the youth. The messages are very motivational and self-empowering, bringing it down to the basic realization that there IS a God. Church should be relaxed, a place where everyone can feel at home.

²⁶ The name, Encounter was derived from Genesis 32:22-32. Jacob wrestled with an angel and the place where they wrestled was then called Pniel. One of the leaders at Encounter explained how he was thinking of a name for their meetings and he said that the word 'encounter' just came into his head. He said it was prophetically given to him. The other leaders were not immediately convinced and wondered what the significance was. Then someone was watching Benny Hinn, famous televangelist on TBN. They saw a lady discussing a movement called Pniel ministries. She said it meant the same as an encounter with God - that it was like a one on one meeting with Jesus. They all agreed that that was confirmation for them that they had found the right name. Thus, the name Encounter refers to a personal meeting with Jesus after which a person's life can never be the same again.

I never wear a suit to the youth nights. Then the people would think I'm too far fetched and that the message would be one with which they would be unable to relate. The churches of today are too boring. They need to create something new, exciting and fresh. Jesus is different from the norm. When Jesus taught, thousands of men came to listen, thus, it was exciting! Men left their wives and children at home to go and listen to Jesus. He was exciting!

(Encounter Pastor 20.11.2006).

5.3 Social structure: growth and involvement, functioning and joint ventures

Today, Encounter can be classified as a Charismatic Pentecostal movement. By the end of my fieldwork period, mid-2007, there were about 200 regular members. Roughly 100 people over the age of 19, 50 teenagers between the ages of 13 and 19 and 50 kids under the age of 13 attended the Friday youth nights on a regular basis. These numbers excluded the visitors who came and went every week. Friday nights were packed with people of all ages.

5.3.1 Growth and involvement

The growth I have witnessed since my first visit to Encounter, has been visually noticeable. I have seen the development of order and structure, of leadership and teams and the assignment of specifically delegated responsibilities. As the number of visitors increased weekly, the leaders were faced with issues that required organizational skill. Thus, their meetings have visually shifted from a loosely gathered group of people to an organized setup. Volunteers were mobilized to help carry the load and thus power structures and safe-guards were put into place.

Some of the changes evident were the appointment of a team of 'ushers'. They were responsible for welcoming the visitors and assuring that everyone had a seat and were aware of ready assistance available if they required any during the service. After the sermon, if people went to the front for prayer, the ushers went and stood behind them, lay their hands on them, and prayed for them. When people fell down under the power of the Holy Spirit, the ushers covered them each with a small purple blanket to prevent any embarrassment. The blankets were also introduced in time as the need was recognized. Eventually the ushers started wearing the same colour shirts (orange/red) so that visitors could easily recognize them.



Figure 5.2 Purple blankets, notice the usher in the orange/red shirt handing out the blankets (2007.07.06). Figure 5.3 Purple blankets (2007.07.06).

Another addition to Encounter was the team of four security guards. They explained that some nights boys were trouble-makers that were drunk and came to the meetings because of all the girls. The security guards were there to assure order and safety and they also kept an eye on the parked vehicles outside. Another role of the security guards involved the order inside the building during the singing and the sermon. During the beginning stages of Encounter, the kids used to run around the building and chit chat during the sermons. During the praise and worship singing, they all rushed to the front and danced and sang with the band. In time, the security guards started quieting the kids and they disciplined them by sending the talkers outside by sternly ushering them to their seats after the singing. This was so as not to upset the grown-ups or preachers. This caused mixed feelings among the members because some felt that the kids had to receive priority attention since the focus of the youth nights were primarily on them. However, it was decided that they were allowed to sit on the floor in the front during the sermon and during any activities. Although some members also felt that the security guards abused their power by being too harsh, the amount of order and discipline seemed to benefit everyone.

The décor inside and outside the building was gradually transformed from the Samburgh Hotel to EHHSF. One afternoon I unofficially dropped by the building and saw that workers were busy retiling the front of the main hall and re-carpeting the back. In big letters, Encounter was spelled out in the tiles. Every Friday evening there were fresh flowers on the stage and even the band and the choir grew in their membership. All the sermons were recorded on a DVD camera and the words of the songs were displayed on a screen behind the band. At the entrance to the parking lot and on the wall above the main entrance of the building big signs proclaimed: *Encounter*.



Figure 5.4 Encounter spelled out in the tiles at the front. The checkered carpet was also brand new. Fresh flowers were on display at every meeting (2007.03.14).



Figure 5.5 Flowers, power point words and kids coming to the front to sing and dance with the band and the choir. The glass 'cage' surrounding the drummer was also purchased after they realized that the hall carried the sound of the drums at deafening volumes through to the crowd.

Encounter started as a youth gathering, but many adults were also attending and the meetings were increasingly taking on the form of a formal church service. It was impossible to look at the future of Encounter and exclude the older generation. So, with the help of other key congregations outside of Pniel, the leaders decided on a suitable vision, mission and purpose for Encounter that included people of all ages, classes and races:

Vision

‘Our vision is for people of every race, color, language, denomination and creed to experience God in a personal way, as we call it a one on one encounter with Jesus Christ (*Based on the woman with the issue of blood*).’

Mission

‘To win the lost souls and making disciples of all nations, preaching the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and building the Kingdom of God.’

Purpose

‘To equip and develop all Gods Children not by might, nor by power but by the Spirit of God, to a purpose driven life, a life of freedom through the blood of Jesus Christ.’

Luke 3:16

‘John answered them all, “I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” – NIV.²⁷

(Official fax received from EHHSF 2007).

These words were printed out on A4 sheets and pasted on the bulletin board at the main entrance and on the walls inside the main hall. Everyone could read it and the pastors went through a time of communicating it to their members during the meetings to bring clarity to the existence and future of Encounter.

The significance of the visual growth and formalisation of the church and the process of identity formation displayed within the meetings and on the property were noticeable in the pride and growing sense of belonging and ownership expressed by the membership. The formulation of a clear vision, mission and purpose also empowered the members with a sense of direction and expectation. Many members recognized and embraced their individual roles and individual growth and attached worth to being a part of such a movement of apparent transformation in their valley.

²⁷ New International Version of the Bible.

Encounter was still growing and expanding by the end of my fieldwork. As the leaders of Encounter experienced the growth pains and needs of a young organization, they reacted by engaging with the needs as they felt they were led by God and with the person-power and time they had available.

3.5.2 Functioning

According to the pastor in charge of Friday Youth Nights, by mid-2007 their members consisted about 50-50 of people who never used to attend church and people who came over to Encounter from other churches. People came from all over Stellenbosch, Paarl, Grabouw, Lanquedoc, Kylemore, Meerlust, Pniel, Johannesburg, etc. What started as a youth entertainment initiative rapidly developed into a seedling church. By mid-2007, the church had a committed staff of 10 people overseeing and running the 7 formal departments of activities offered. The staff consisted of 2 fulltime workers, a few students and committed members working in the 'market place'.

Despite an enormous task and limited manpower, they offered a full weekly schedule of events as well as regular once-off activities and training- or celebration days with guest speakers.

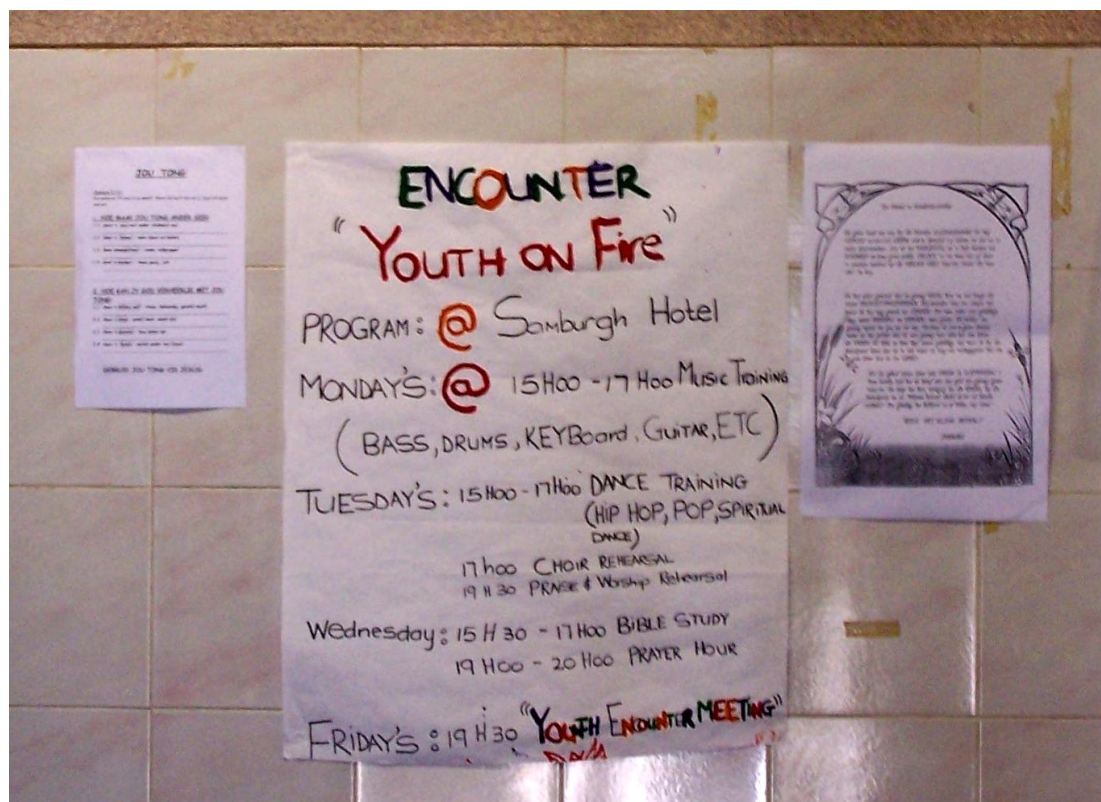


Figure 5.6 Weekly program put up at the entrance of the main hall. This was an old program (2006.08.05).

In 2007, the church started a welfare program. Every afternoon members gave away food parcels, played games and taught the Bible to at least 50 kids from the surrounding villages. Some afternoons they also did door to door evangelism or house visits. Many of the families they visited and the majority of the children who came to the welfare program to receive food came from families who lived and worked on the surrounding farms. The welfare program and door-to-door evangelism was started around mid-2007 as they recognized that many of the kids visiting their meetings were below the age of 13 and they stayed till the late hours without their parents present or looking for them.

Apart from these two activities, most community activities and practices were scheduled in the evenings so that people working in 8-5 jobs could also participate. On Monday evenings the music team (band and choir) came together for prayer and practice. On Tuesday evenings the core group of intercessors and leaders met for prayer while Wednesday evenings was open for everyone to come and pray together. Thursday evenings the dance ministry used the hall. They practiced spiritual dancing, Hip Hop and other types of dancing. Finally, Friday nights were the highlight of the week when everybody gathered together for youth night. They were already planning Sunday services at the end of my fieldwork period by the end of 2007. Already, the leaders were meeting together for prayer and devotions on Sunday mornings. In May 2008, I attended a workshop in Pniel and found out that the Sunday morning services were to begin in August 2008.



Figure 5.7 Friday youth night: kids.



Figure 5.8 Friday youth night: adults.

Before Youth Night, the Encounter staff would drive around the villages with a van and invite all the youth hanging around on the streets to come along to their meetings. Today, they offer lifts to many of the kids whose parents work on the surrounding farms.

In the main hall there was a little stage but no podium. The band and choir used the whole stage to set up their instruments. The preacher or pastor didn't use the stage, but he normally stood at a transparent stand on floor-level where he rested his Bible and glass of water. During the service preachers often walked between the isles and sometimes even all the way around the chairs in the back of the hall back to the front. If what he preached reminded him of a certain praise or worship song, he sometimes burst into spontaneous song and most of the time the congregation joined in with gusto. A man sometimes sat behind the keyboard and for emphasis he played short impromptu riffs matching and/or contributing to the mood and the content of the message (for example, happy or exciting riffs when there was laughter or clapping of hands and soft soothing riffs while the pastor ministered to individuals).

The messages were always followed by an altar call. During the altar call, people were invited to the front, most often to give their lives to Jesus, for prayer, to receive a prophetic word or for deliverance. For every individual at the front, there was always an orange shirted Encounter usher standing behind them with a small purple blanket. When people collapsed under the anointing, convulsed during deliverance or were simply overcome by the presence of God, someone caught them and gently lowered them to the ground. The people who lay on the ground were covered with blankets to prevent embarrassment since they sometimes fell in awkward positions that exposed their bodies. After lying on the floor for quite a long time, eyes closed, new believers got up and were led out by counsellors to the upper level while the congregation rejoiced and encouraged them on.

Other times, people went to the front to receive healing. When people prayed for each other, they placed their hands on the person prayed for. Sometimes the pastor prayed for people loudly over the microphone and at other times, he covered the microphone and silently prayed for people. It depended on the sensitivity of the issue. While he prayed for people, the band played some mellow worship music and most people remained seated or softly sang along.

At Encounter leaders recognized the value of doctors and medicine, however they also believed that God superseded all medical 'facts'. They believed that God was above all

sickness and disease and God was able to heal anything and everything. Thus, they often prayed for diseases and illnesses that were considered by doctors to be without a natural cure. During my fieldwork at Encounter, I witnessed many such successful faith healings. The most remarkable one, for me personally, was when an 'outsider' accompanied me to a youth night and was healed from a medical condition she had been struggling with for over four years.

3.5.3 Joint-ventures

The innovation, expansion and membership growth of Encounter in such a short period couldn't be ignored in the DRV. The fact that many people continued to visit their meetings and invited other people was of great significance. There were various reasons why many people frowned upon this new movement and continued to disapprove of its presence in the valley. On the one hand, the sudden appearance of a new church in a traditionally church-centered village caused friction and raised questions for many residents and organizations. On the other hand, Encounter successfully joined forces with existing churches and organizations in and outside of the valley. On many levels, their relationships with some organizations and churches in the valley were strained or even non-existent.

Encounter was adopted by Koinonia House of Holy Spirit Fire (KHSF) in Johannesburg. They received most of their prayer material and pastoral training from KHSF and the two churches carried each other in prayer. The spiritual leaders at Encounter flew up for training in Johannesburg a few times during the year and it was through this ministry that two of them were ordained as pastors during 2007. Other ministries Encounter was affiliated with outside the DRV, included Prophetic New Life Ministries (PNLM) in Vanderbijl Park, Grace Ministries in Elsies Rivier and Divine Ministries International (DMI). Other charismatic churches of which many Encounter visitors were members included the Brackenfell Synagogue, Lofdal and Green Pastures (GP) in Manenberg. Encounter also supported the international ministry of Pastor TB Joshua from Nigeria.



Figure 5.9 Divine Ministries International healing crusade (2007.06.30).



Figure 5.10 A women tossed her crutch to the floor after being healed at the first DMI Healing Crusade in Pniel (2007.06.30).

Most of the churches in the valley have expressed their desire to work together and admitted to the need for unity amongst them. Especially with the older generation's growing concern about the youth, churches were eager to work together in tackling this problem. However, it was easier said in theory than done in practice. Different perceptions about the different congregations were still rooted deeply in the minds of many church members. Some doubted the integrity of their own church leaders when it came down to issues of status and salary. Other less personal issues concerned the question of which church would take the lead during joint ventures. Encounter seemed to have stronger relationships with churches outside the valley, mostly from the Pentecostal tradition, than with the established churches in the DRV.

Other problems that surfaced were primarily based on differences in Biblical interpretations, dogma and theology. Charismatic churches characteristically practiced the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Preachers and pastors were appointed and were often people without formal degrees or years of training. Encounter has been accused of stealing the members of other churches and of 'playing God'. Some of the members at Encounter retained their membership at the Congregational Church for reasons such as burial rights, weddings and for fear of social critique.

One tik addict said the following after I asked him if he knew about Encounter:

'The place wasn't right. Sometimes you can just get a feeling about a place. The converts who go there still do the same wrong things when they come out. You want to look up to them, but most convert and then still use the Tik'.

(Tik user from Pniel, my translation 2007.09.13).

He said that many people went to Encounter for a while, but that it was often just a temporary thing. However, many people criticized Encounter but after enquiring they admitted that they themselves have never been to any of their meetings. They either formed their opinion based on what they heard about the place from others or they heard the music and sound from outside and didn't like what they heard.

One of the Encounter leaders explained why he thought Encounter struggled to interact with some of the other churches in the valley:

‘The difference between Encounter and the other churches is that Encounter makes no race discrimination. Indian, coloured, black, white or anybody is welcome. As long as you have blood flowing in your veins and that blood is the Blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ. Pniel is a very colour dominated area, coloureds tend to look out for each other. Encounter purposes to sensitize the town to the idea of mixed races standing in unity. African pastors from Nigeria and Kenya and white ministers from Gauteng often visit and lead the meetings. In this way the community is exposed to alternative forms of worship and community’.

(Indian pastor at Encounter, my translation 2006.11.20).

Another leader explained that the challenges facing those in favour of joint efforts were met by starting with small steps in order to sensitize the rest of the church to the idea of working together. The first, friendliest step was when individuals visited each others churches. Many people were wary and skeptical of what happened at Encounter on Friday nights. However, after attending one or two youth meetings, many women were impressed with the children’s church. Other positive interaction happened through the youth groups of the various churches. The dance group of Encounter visited some of the other churches in the valley and received lots of positive feedback.

By the end of my fieldwork, mid-2007, lots of ideas, visions and plans were in the pipeline for joint activities in the future. Encounter envisioned a Tik-awareness day. They planned to invite all the churches in the valley to participate and pray specifically and exclusively for the eradication of Tik. Many people viewed the Tik crisis as an opportunity for the organizations and churches of the valley to work together in unity because the problem affected them all, irrespective of denomination. Through relationships the different communities could interact and learn from each other while supporting each other.

Encounter supported the youth gatherings of the Congregational Church on Saturday nights. They also worked together with the Baptist church in Kylemore. Together, they had prayer meetings and were in cooperation with evangelism efforts and ‘Kingdom dynamics’.

They have also received open doors at Kylemore High where some of the Encounter staff have gone to address the youth on spiritual, leadership and value issues.

In light of the joint ventures, functioning, growth and involvement of Encounter, it could be safe to argue that the effect of the disruption it has caused in the valley was not enduring. Power struggles and territorial disputes could have major effects on inter-organizational relationships. However, by taking a closer look at the methods and theology of Encounter, it became evident that it clashed with the strong traditional character of Pniel. Not only was the presence of a new church with alternative interpretations of the Bible a threat to the way of life and world view of many residents, the biggest threat was the imminent change Encounter brought to Pniel. This change was not just visible and tangible. It affected the mindsets, worldview and fundamental religious convictions of many residents. Although Encounter held strong ties with 'outside' organizations and churches, its founders came from families that had been locals in Pniel for more than one generation. They thus represented change from the inside. This challenge was often harder for the traditional mind to grasp and come to terms with. Whenever 'one of your own' attempted something new, it affected everybody on some level.

Encounter, as a Christian movement, linked itself to the very history of traditional Pniel (the former Christian mission station) while simultaneously causing changes similar to those that the *inkommers* and the development of the surrounding farms were causing. Due to this correlation, many residents failed to recognize that change was a continuous, unavoidable phenomenon which would have affected the valley whether Encounter existed or not.

In the next section, I address the paradox of why some people were embracing Encounter as a beacon of hope pointing to new life in Christ while others viewed it as a cult that disrupted the unity in Pniel. A special focus is given to the alternative spiritual methods, meanings and interpretations communicated through Encounter in order to understand the circumstances, times and social issues that faced the DRV at the time of my fieldwork. By specifically focusing on the exercise of spirituality at Encounter, it becomes clear that people's embracing or shunning of Encounter revolved primarily around this aspect.

5.4 Inside Encounter: spiritual warfare and Holy Spirit movement

This section is given to illustrate the alternative, faith-activated methods used to address social needs and problems at Encounter. The four most important aspects that made Encounter effective and relevant in the DRV, according to this perspective, were:

- 5.2.1 Specific, specialized focus and attention on the youth (from disappointed to anointed and appointed).
- 5.2.2 Access to spiritual weapons of warfare through prophetic actions (fire for the Messiah).
- 5.2.3 Identity formation through the act of giving (Turn your need to seed).
- 5.2.4 Identity formation through words of affirmation (The head and not the Tail).

5.4.1 Specific, specialized focus and attention on the youth

From disappointed to anointed and appointed

Friday evenings were Youth Nights at Encounter. The worship was facilitated by a live band that played energetic songs often accompanied by bodily movements. A third of the hall, right in front, was filled with kids doing synchronized dances and basically just having fun. This was appealing to the youth who were struggling to relate to the traditional, conservative forms of worship. Characteristically, Pentecostals were less concerned with traditions and formalities. Their knowledge primarily came from the Holy Spirit and from spiritual leaders, seminars and training by sister churches the world over.

When she recently met up with the youth again, she noticed how much they had grown spiritually without having received 'training'. This gladdened her heart since this had been her prayer from the beginning: she had been trained first-hand by the Spirit and her prayer for the youth was that the Spirit would train them as well. This was based on the scripture 1 John 2:27²⁸.

(Notes from an Interview with Encounter leader 2007.03.14).

The emphasis on a life through the Spirit of God also steered away from the strict format of traditional church services. Youth nights were characterized by spontaneous reactions to Holy Spirit promptings.

²⁸ 'As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit – just as it has taught you, remain in him.'

The following is an example of one of many regular unplanned prophetic actions. In this one, specifically, the kids were involved:

The pastor called all the kids to the front. He then quoted scripture from the Bible and told everyone that children were a blessing from the Lord, saying 'blessed are the pure in heart (like little children), unless we become like them, we will not inherit the Kingdom of God. We need to have faith like a child. In these children lie many prophets, teachers, evangelists and pastors. Many of the older people are shy for Jesus, but we want to teach our kids from a young age that they should not be. The adults can remain seated while the kids are going to now perform a prophetic action'.

'The Lord required of the Israelites to march around the walls of Jericho 6 times in silence and during the 7th time they were to shout and make noise and the walls came tumbling down'. So the pastor told the kids to form a huge circle and to start walking round and round while he counted to 7 (because 7 was seen as the number of completion). When he got to 7 the kids had to shout at the top of their lungs 'Jesus!' And then everyone had to trust for their walls (any social or personal problems) to come down, whatever it might be. He then told the musician to 'kap' Kanaan (a song about Canaan) when the walls start to fall because they were all going into the Promised Land.

This whole event caused great enthusiasm amongst the kids and although many of them were not listening or necessarily understanding exactly what was going on, they participated with gusto and laughter. As they started shouting it almost went hand in hand with a domino effect as they pushed against each other! It was all in all incredibly joyful and fun. And then the music fell in and everyone jumped to their feet and started praising and dancing again. The overall feel of the evening as with so many of the other evenings, was that of pure joy and ecstasy.

(Youth Night at Encounter 2007.02.23).

This example was one of many where the children were drawn into the services. They were given the opportunity to contribute to the spiritual content of the services. The kids who participated in this prophetic action were mostly under the age of 12. During other youth nights I have seen teenagers run the services and children of all ages were actively involved in the dancing and dramas when they were performed.

After the services there were snacks and pool tables and thus enough entertainment to keep the youth busy. Encounter thus catered for the specific need of recreation and leisure of the youth. Along with the entertainment, they also offered skills development during the week where kids could join the band, the choir or the dance and drama teams.

During services, the responsibility of the older generation to look after the younger generation was often addressed. During Encounter's youth conference in 2007 some pastors from the USA visited. One of the pastors' wives gave the congregation a prophetic word concerning the youth. She told the parents who were present that all the kids who came from broken homes where their parents were absent, were from now on their responsibility. She also said: 'South Africa, Satan is pulling on you and your children. It is time to push back' (USA Pastor 2007.04.13).

On another occasion some primary school kids performed a play depicting hungry street children. The fact of the matter was that the 'actors' were actually revealing their true life situations to the congregation. Afterwards a lady made an appeal to the older people to please consider the adoption of two girls who had no home. They emphasized the fact that they didn't want any of the kids in need of healthy homes in Pniel to have to go to foster homes outside of the valley. The woman in charge of this initiative has herself adopted two girls into her house. Her vision was to some day open an orphanage for the street children and children with broken families in Pniel. Through these actions, social responsibility was 'taught' to the older generation at Encounter. Another need that was addressed at Encounter was the need for food security in the form of food parcels that were handed out to hungry kids during the afternoons.



Figure 5.11 Prophetic dancing during praise and worship at youth night.



Figure 5.12 Prophetic dancing. Figure 5.13 Prophetic dancing and spiritual dancing during praise and worship on youth night.

5.4.2 Access to spiritual weapons of warfare through prophetic actions

Fire for the Messiah

Then he did something quite different: he told everyone to stand up. He waited until they did so (he did this a few times during the evening). 'While every head is bowed and eye closed, wait expectantly for the Lord. In the next few moments something is going to happen that will change your lives forever.' Instead of the usual clapping of hands or echoing of hallelujahs and amen's, the pastor spoke and silence followed. At some stage he told everyone to say 'Jesus, Jesus, Jesus...' and at another time we were to repeat, 'the Blood, the Blood, the Blood...'

(Encounter Youth Night 2007.04.20).

As the pastor was praying and everyone participated, he proceeded throughout the evening to cast out demons by literally calling them out in the name of Jesus. At the same service a person received healing from an arm injury. Through this demonstration of faith in God through prophetic proclamations, the pastor put the keys for spiritual remedies for social problems in the hands of the congregation.

Another night, one of the pastors said that there was a person with hip problems in the hall. I knew my friend who came with me that evening had hip problems for four years, so I asked her if she was going to respond. She eventually decided to go up to the front. He prayed for her, she fell over and immediately she testified that she had been healed. I asked her about a month later how her hips were and she said she often laughed because when she did her classes in the gym she knew she was supposed to be in agonizing pain, but it just didn't come! She was completely healed after struggling for four years with this pain and having had to quit her profession as a dancer because of it (Visiting Prophet at Encounter 2007.07.06).



Figure 5.14 Laying on of hands during prayer.



Figure 5.15 Laying on of hands. Figure 5.16 Prayer through the laying on of hands.

During my fieldwork period I witnessed many healings and people delivered from demons at Encounter. One evening a woman threw up in a bucket as they were praying for a demon to leave her body. Another time, a boy who used to be addicted to tik started losing his balance and eventually tried to crawl to the door when they prayed for demons and evil spirits to leave his body. Another time an old lady fell off her chair and

started crying out in a loud voice. At first I thought she was in pain, but later I realized she was crying and saying thank you to the Lord.

I don't know whether she had been healed or what exactly had happened, but her joy was verbally exclaimed as she lay on the floor. Most of the time, when mass prayer and deliverance was taking place people prayed in tongues before they prayed in a natural language.

These prophetic prayers and actions of deliverance were illogical methods, soaked with faith in God's supernatural healing power, with the hope (and for believers also often the evidence) of natural results. In other words, by the mere laying on of hands people were healed from diseases and pain, by the mere prayers of a fellow believer, people received peace and joy after being distressed or in depression.

5.4.3 Identity formation through the act of giving

Turn your need to seed

During these Friday night services, there were always about twenty minutes allotted for the tithes and offering (T&O) message. This was where the act of giving was ritualized in the form of a message after which anyone who so desired could go to the front and drop money in a basket.

A person's tithe was considered to be the tenth of his or her income which he/she owed to God, whereas anything given over and above that was considered to be an offering. Tithes tended to be money while offerings were often material possessions as well. In the Pentecostal tradition people were encouraged to give their tithes and offerings in order not to be bound by it. This did not mean that all wealth had to be given away, only those things one felt might be hindering your relationship with God (Meyer 1999:757). To quote some pastors at Encounter, 'when you give then you are truly free' and 'giving is the highest form of living' and 'it is more blessed to give than to receive'.

However, everything you possessed was believed to actually belong to God so in the same way that He could take things from you, He could also provide for you. Thus, scriptures quoting God's desire to bless his people because of his love for them were often read. The giving of money was then linked to receiving supernatural spiritual breakthrough in areas such as finances, health and social problems. This served as a major motivation to give. One girl used the catchy phrase, 'turn your need to seed'.

Symbolically money was seen as 'seed' which you plant and as you then 'water' that seed with faith, God would make it 'grow' into a plant that produced 'fruit'. In other words, He would provide for your needs. Another pastor encouraged the people saying that, 'God don't want us to be broke, busted and disgusted' because God loved his people, He didn't want anyone to live in poverty. Pictures were painted of content lifestyles and one of the ways in which to access these 'greener pastures' was to give.

However, it was not that simple. At Encounter, when people gave they were told that they needed to combine their faith with their gift and this faith had to be expressed verbally. The messages surrounding T&O were relevant to the needs of the target audience. The two most common issues addressed were lack of finances (including debts) or material well-being and social hardship. 'Call your things into being and say Money Increase!' or 'as you tithe, in faith say to your mountain (any hardship you might face): Move!'

'You need to speak to your problems: finances, etc. Whenever you sow, sow in faith! Call in a better job! A better car! A better household! Speak!! When you sow, expect God to bless you. Some sow just to sow. But you have to ask yourself the question: am I speaking to my mountain? In order to do most things, you need finances. Giving is part of your worship.

Anyone can sow but if you don't tell your mountain to move... I'm trusting God for breakthrough tonight! Because I'm sowing tonight I will get my car. Trust God for supernatural breakthrough.

God don't want us to be broke busted and disgusted. He loves you and wants you to prosper. He doesn't want us to be in poverty so start prophesying over your money. Money is not dead in your hand, it is alive. You need to water your seed and start speaking to your debt.

When you have the anointing, it means that God's hand is upon you. Speak healing over your finances, pray for a spirit of multiplication to come down on it, break the curse of this world and tell your finances, 'Increase!'

After everyone who wanted to, gave money, the pastor told everyone to start praying over the money.

'Pray that God would bless it. No, don't just pray over it, prophecy over it. Prophecy that God would send the spirit of multiplication over your money. Pray that the curse of this world will be broken over your finances and that the

Spirit of God would come over it so that it would increase. God will bless us because He loves us’.

(Youth Nights 2007.01.27 and 2007.02.02).

Not only were members encouraged to prophecy, but they could demonstrate their faith by actually giving something of material worth. Through this act of giving, a reciprocal expectation of answered prayer followed. As people gave, they were taught to trust for any social problem to be eradicated. These included relational issues, problems of debt, poverty, unemployment and abuse. This was an empowering action. Through the simple act of giving something you value away, you could ‘speak to any mountain’ you might have been facing and tell it to ‘move’.

‘I’d rather have Jesus than silver or gold because all the silver and gold belongs to Jesus anyway so if I am in need I’ll just pray to him and He will provide. He has placed the power of signs and wonders and miracles in the hands of the people, and everyone through Jesus’.

(Visiting pastor 2007.07.06).

It is important to note that giving material things was not the only way through which prayer was believed to be answered. These were merely some examples.

The owner of Encounter’s son headed up the ministry element of Encounter. According to his testimony, earthly possessions used to define his life. Before he got to know the Lord, he used to hold himself *kwaai* in this world (consider himself to be very cool and popular). He drank a lot and owned a very fancy car. He used to boast about how much he could drink and proceeded to speed up to 225km/h on the highways while under the influence. The following day he would be completely useless and unproductive due to a heavy hangover. Then he got converted to Christianity or *saved* by God. He saw this as a gift from God, a second chance, the gift of life from God. Since then, he has gotten to know God and professed to have a relationship with God. This motivated and compelled him to tell other people about the dangers of drinking and driving and about the importance of a relationship with God.

At Encounter, talents were believed to be gifts from God. Musicians were obliged to serve their community with their talent gifts. Other gifts which were believed to come from God or from the Holy Spirit included the gifts of prophecy, healing, teaching, etc. All these gifts were practiced at Encounter. It was believed that people with these gifts had received them for the benefit and service of the whole church. In other words these gifts

were not to be kept for you alone and the church expected people to come forward and reveal their gifts.

A visiting pastor told the congregation that he had twice given his car away to people who were in need. He told them that he was more dependent on God than on his car, he was now free and did not regret doing it since God was his main provider. Another preacher took off his golden watch and proceeded to explain to the congregation how he would not mind giving it away, and that the watch was worthless in the Kingdom of God. He was echoed with exuberant hallelujahs and amens. These examples showed how people were willing to give away things in order to establish their dependency. They claimed to be more dependent on God than on any material possession.

Through declaring their independence from material goods, they chose to no longer be defined by it and thus it resulted in an identity shift from being in need to being content, from being in want to being able to contribute, from a state of dependence to a state of emancipation. Yet, the so-called prosperity teaching was also evident in the tithe and offerings messages 'which taught that God would bless true 'born again' Christians with prosperity' (Meyer 1999:760). This could turn the motivation to give into an ambition to receive.

There was a type of dual doctrine preached: on the one hand you could give because God *wanted* to bless you, it was his desire (better jobs, cars, homes, contracts etc.). But you had to give in order to show that you were not dependent on earthly possessions. Gold and land did not determine your worth or value. These examples revealed how people gave money in the hope of receiving blessings of earthly value or the alleviation from social problems. People gave away possessions in order to reveal their independence of them. These two apparently opposing channels of generosity and desire/need were complementary, not in their motivations but rather in their outcomes. Gift-giving contributed to a whole new identity: earthly possessions no longer served as the main defining element in life. 'When you give it away, then you are truly free'. The liberty in being able to give away your possessions served as a means of overcoming certain social realities. Lack did not define you since the worth of your possessions no longer defined the worth/value of the person. Examples of consumption patterns of the Ewe converts in Ghana showed how they 'could construct a new, modern identity – modern not only in the sense that they possessed hitherto unknown things, but, above all in the sense of a change of notions of selfhood' (Meyer,1999:756). This was similar with Encounter.

Cars and possessions were given away, drinking habits were discontinued etc. and so a whole new identity was found through conversion and established through acts of giving. This contributed to individuals' motivation in the community to a gradual state of cooperation rather than defection. An identity shift took place from being a victim (of social ills) to becoming a victor or an 'overcomer' of your circumstances.

5.4.4 Identity formation through words of affirmation

You are the head and NOT the tail

Encounter also served as a platform where people could come clean and confess their sins. A lot of encouragement took place there. People were continually affirmed and their identities were directly addressed by the pastors and preachers.

'There is a Champion inside of you. You are favoured, the blessed of God. Don't ever let people tell you you cannot do it! If you understand, shout 'Amen!''

(Youth Night 2006.12.01).

'We are influenced to influence. We are new in Jesus Christ. The old doesn't exist anymore, it doesn't hold me anymore. The biggest weapon of the devil is the question: *wat sal mense sê?* (what will people say). We are so tuned into what people say that we miss what God is trying to say. 'In the Name of Jesus' bring an end to sin, poverty, sickness, people gossiping etc. *Laat dit LYK dat jy Jesus het* (let it SHOW that you have Jesus!). We were not meant to crawl – we were meant to fly like eagles!!' And so he moved around the hall, slapping people's hands in the air, laughing in the microphone and even jumping on chairs. 'Tonight God will bring down the walls of gossip, tradition, things holding you back from experiencing God and breakthrough in your life!'

(Visiting pastor 2007.07.06).

Even the visiting pastors purposefully addressed the audience with words to lift them up. People were encouraged to never let circumstances determine their worth or cause them to feel inferior to anybody around them. In other words, status, position and class were addressed and discarded as not being the determining factors of a person's worth. The only identity that was to matter to them was their new identity in Christ which placed everyone on an equal platform in the world.

5.3 Conclusion

Encounter had a controversial effect in the DRV. Many of the older generation who were used to the traditions and religious culture of the Congregational Church verbally opposed their youth nights. At the same time, many older people and especially many young people attended their meetings.

The issues addressed during Youth Night services were relevant to many residents, not only in Pniel but also in the rest of the valley. Especially people from Lanquedoc and Kylemore and other people working on the surrounding farms who earned a lower income found hope in the explanations and solutions given to the social issues they were facing. The main social problem affecting the youth, Tik, was not only addressed but also fought through spiritual methods such as deliverance and prophetic prayer and also through the provision of entertainment. The positive results of these actions were evident in the numbers of youth, who previously didn't want anything to do with the church, attending their meetings on Friday evenings.

6. CONCLUSION

Local churches, organisations and unofficial initiatives addressed most of the major social problems facing the DRV. Although there was a lot of responses (organised and less organised) to the youth crisis, the magnitude of the problem still seemed to outweigh the attempts at solutions. The economic changes, uncertain social climate and the gradual break that the younger generation made with many traditions in the valley resulted in a state of insecurity and uncertainty for many of the older generation. It was during this time that Encounter opened its doors. Encounter presented alternative interpretations and explanations for common social problems in the DRV. The nature of their worship services and the specific focus they had on the youth drew many people to their meetings. Encounter was different in that it was vocal and without compromise on the spiritual nature of the meanings attached to all social circumstances they addressed.

According to Weber, when a society is marked by increased uncertainty, change or insecurity, the voices of religious leaders tend to carry more weight and people are more open for their interpretations and explanations of the times (Erickson and Murphy 2003:135). The DRV villages are currently faced with an increase in the percentage of Tik addiction amongst the youth as well as with a crisis in traditional family structure. For a traditionally and historically Christian community, this causes uncertainty and disillusionment if the church fails to address these issues adequately. In times such as these, just as citizens are in need of a strong political leader, believers are on the lookout for spiritual leaders who speak with authority and certainty. The emergence of a new church with alternative angles in addressing and practically approaching these problems led to many believers to move from their traditional churches to Encounter. Encounter was successfully presenting itself as a beacon of truth, security and as a facilitator of divine explanations and answers for many people.

During these services various social issues or 'mountains', (poverty, substance abuse, unemployment, sickness etc.) were addressed and countered through intangible answers and words that were believed to be filled with power. The power lay in the individual's belief in God and it was 'activated' through verbal utterance. What people sang/said/prayed was believed to be literally what they could get if God so willed it. The remedies were simple and easily accessible and understandable for all. They showed no class, race or gender distinctions and thus the only limitation communicated to their use was a matter of individual choice. Encounter thus represented itself as a powerful facilitator of truth, change and power.

Those who attended were blessed with self-worth affirmation and the immediate access to potential power through a relationship with God to change their social circumstances. Not only did this give them power, it also presented itself as a creative way in which to mold identity.

‘As believers become skilful users of sacredly charged words, they create a sense of their identity as actors within an arena of action which appears to set no limits on imagination or ambition, and which responds in controllable ways to principles that are universal in their application’

(Coleman 2000:118).

Within the four walls of the church a platform was created for the open execution of spiritual warfare by the use of scriptures from the Bible. Although confined to the realm of Christianity and in particular, to Pentecostalism, this study has highlighted some alternative strategies for combating social issues. The emotional and moral capital it created in a community became meaningful in terms of unity, identity and empowerment as one aspect of its influence.

So why were people drawn to Encounter? Encounter presented itself in a secure manner, able to interpret the times and thus providing a place of certainty in an era of continuous change and uncertainty. Characteristic of a church, through spiritual interpretation, the leaders attempted to answer some of life's fundamental questions with specific reference to explaining the current social problems people were facing. Although causing discussion and uncertainty for many skeptical people, its newness attracted many to their energetic and relevant worship services. This form of worship was also a very relevant form of leisure and fun for people, especially the youth. The dance hall, pool tables, live band and snacks after services also drew a lot of people. However, the twist was that although it filled the leisure gap in the valley, it came with a specific doctrine and belief that not all leisure seekers were able to identify with.

Thus, on the other hand, Encounter caused a lot of discussion and distrust among many residents who held strongly to the doctrines and methods of the traditional churches, especially the Congregational Church in Pniel. For many of these residents, Encounter was the very symbol that represented the much feared change in the valley. Encounter's unofficial membership and undefined rules for participation forced many people to a place of redefining for themselves who or what the character and role of the church were

supposed to be. The role of the church in society was once again brought under the spotlight due to the varying roles played by the various denominations.

There was a need to focus on relations of care, such as in the family. Deteriorating family structures resulted in more crime, interpersonal problems and psychiatric problems. There was a need for men to stand up and have a solid voice heard against injustice, crime, poverty and drugs. Men were absent in the fight for a healthy social environment. Men needed to walk the rehabilitation path with young boys and other men. A woman could not counsel a man of violent history, men needed to have had the time and patience and needed to put in the effort to do this. In most of the local initiatives and also to some extent at Encounter, the gender representation at meetings was imbalanced. Usually more women and children attended meetings than men. However, this imbalanced was addressed at the meetings and the leaders challenged the men to take up their roles as fathers for their kids and husbands for their wives.

Jail is not the answer for crime. Jail only breeds more vicious criminals and provides a place where alliances are formed and gangs are birthed and strengthened. The real place for rehabilitation starts in the family with the assistance, guidance and moral support of the wider society, including the church. Within the church, there are trained counselors who specialize in rehabilitation. Justice, although of vital importance, cannot ensure complete confession, forgiveness, restitution or healing. Within the church these important restoration elements can be combined with the necessary justice provided by the government and the law.

One Tik addict made the following statement concerning jail:

‘Your Anti loves you too much. She won’t send you to jail. Your friends all escape jail somehow anyway, murderers, etc. Thus, jail doesn’t scare anymore, it is just temporary anyway’.

(Tik user in Pniel 2007.09.13).

A space was created at Encounter where people could talk about their problems, almost like the space provided by the TRC for the wider South African society. Testimonies were given about past sins and troubles and people encouraged and affirmed each other’s identity as ‘new creations’ in Christ, rather than to throw stones and judge outright the confessors according to their deeds.

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